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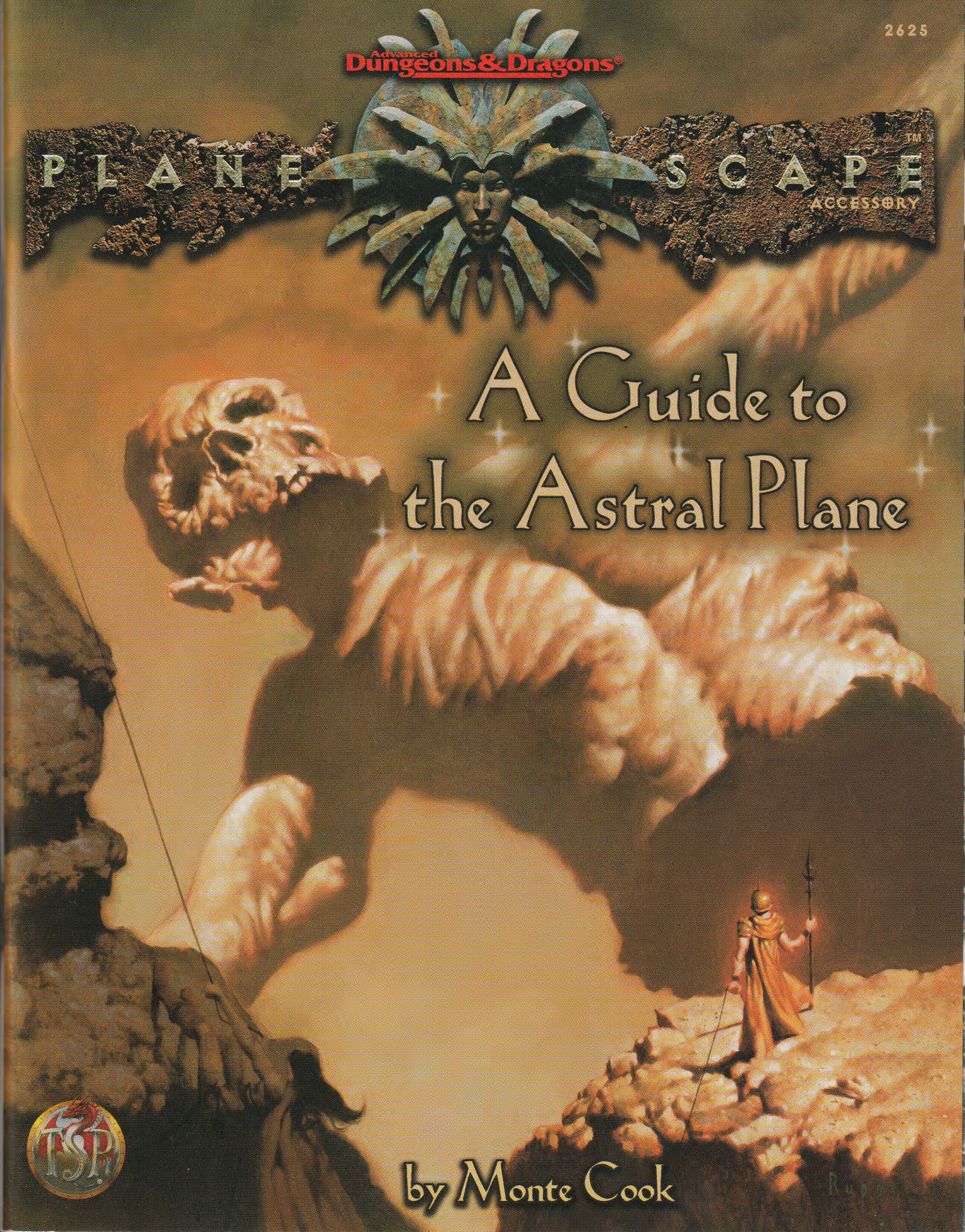
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

PLANESCAPE™ ACCESSORY

A Guide to the Astral Plane



by Monte Cook

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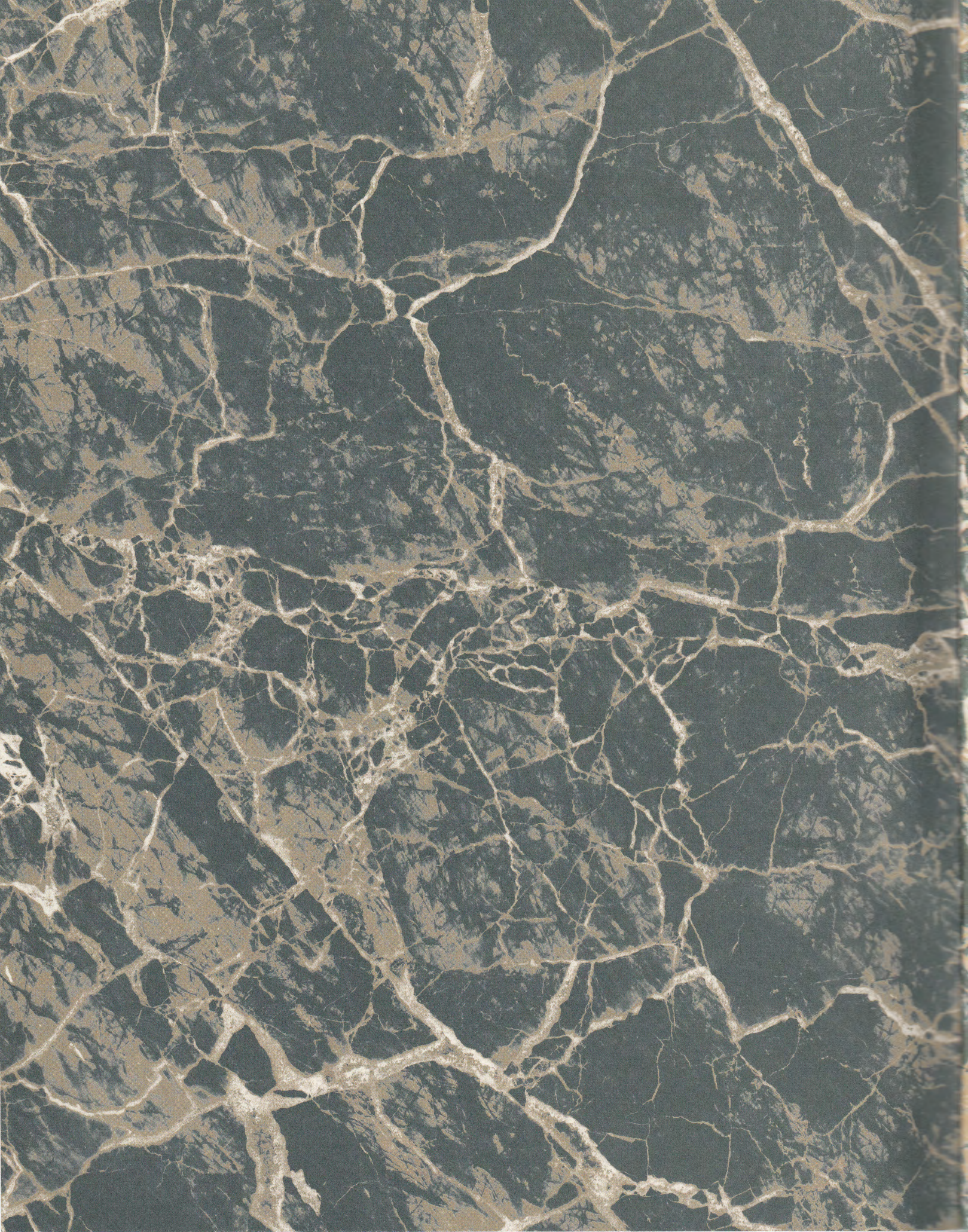

A Guide to the Astral Plane

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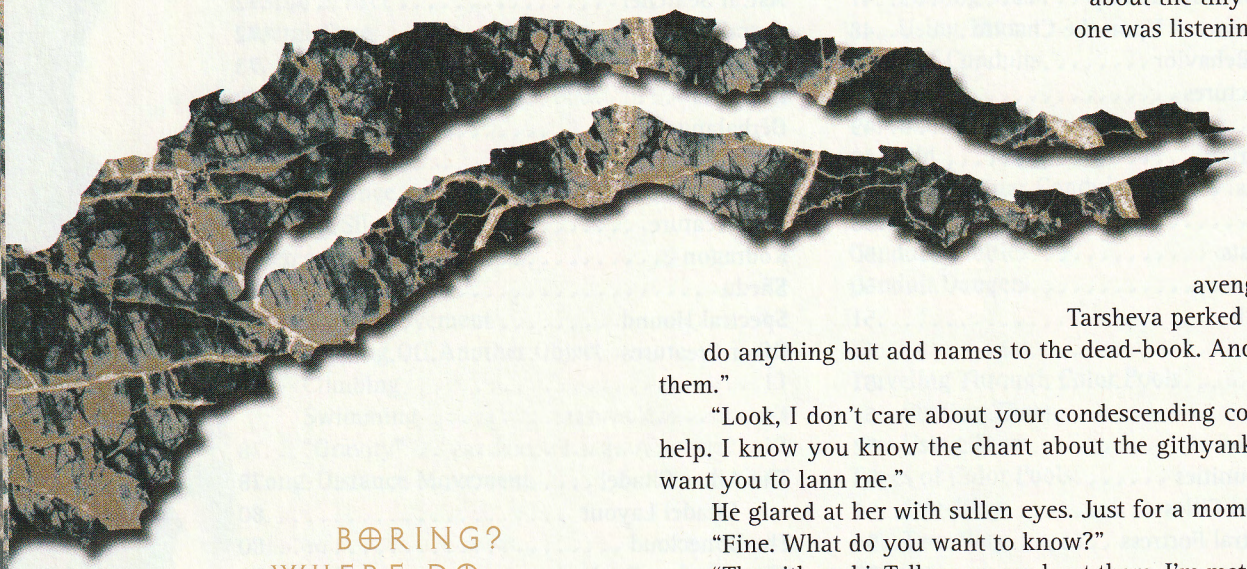
All the World's a Stage: Introduction



BORING? WHERE DO YOU GO FOR AN INTERESTING TIME?

— SOMEONE WHO HAS VISITED THE ASTRAL TALKING TO SOMEONE WHO HASN'T

"I've been a planewalker for a few years now, Tarsheva," Felliz explained. While not terribly interested, Tarsheva motioned for him to go on.

"Well, I've traveled through a number of gates and portals, and been to a bunch of the planes. I've even used an astral conduit or two. But I've never really been to the Astral Plane to speak of." Felliz's normally confident bearing was wrinkled with feelings it was unaccustomed to – conscience, guilt, and possibly humility.

"Uh huh."

"Now, well . . . I have to go there. The githyanki killed a friend of mine. Sliced her silver cord while she was using the *astral spell*." He looked about the tiny tavern to check if anyone was listening in. No one was. Most folks in Sigil had better things to do.

"She was a prime, and she was coming to see me, out here. Now . . . I've got to avenge her."

Tarsheva perked up. "Vengeance doesn't do anything but add names to the dead-book. And yours might be one of them."

"Look, I don't care about your condescending concern. I just want your help. I know you know the chant about the githyanki and the Astral, and I want you to lann me."

He glared at her with sullen eyes. Just for a moment, she met his gaze.

"Fine. What do you want to know?"

"The githyanki. Tell me more about them. I'm met up with some githzerai, but I've heard the githyanki are different in a few –"

"Very different," Tarsheva interrupted, "but they're not your first, or even your main, concern if you're going to the Astral Plane. By the gods, they're not even natives. Just settlers who called kip there years ago. No, my friend, you've got to learn about how the plane works first."

"I'm listening."

"Ever been to a play?" Tarsheva asked, lifting her cup to her mouth.

"Sure. I've even been in a few. I did some time with a group of traveling actors in Ysgard. We once –"

"Then you can tumble to what backstage means."

"Of course."

Tarsheva pushed her long brown hair away from her face. The scar revealed near her temple served to punctuate her words – an effect she was well aware of and used when making important, but complicated points. "It's not entirely inaccurate to think of the Astral Plane as the backstage of the multiverse."

"Huh?" Felliz said, dropping all pretense of erudition.

"The multiverse is the stage. It's where things happen. It's what folks are supposed to see. The Astral is in the background. It's not something anyone was ever supposed to see. No one was ever supposed to go there. It isn't a *there* at all. No space, no time, nothing."

"Wait a minute. Back up. The Astral Plane isn't part of the multiverse?"

"Not really. It's the place in between."

"In between what?"

"Everything."

A Guide to the Astral Plane is a PLANESCAPE™ sourcebook that describes the Silver Void. Home to creatures as varied as the evil race known as the githyanki and the enigmatic, spiritual astral searchers, the Astral Plane has always retained an important place in the AD&D® game. Rather than being just a simple interplanar highway system, however, unique features and strange wonders which can provide limitless and varied adventures fill the Astral Plane.

The Astral Plane holds a unique place in the multiverse. A place solely of the mind, everything there is a construct of the mind, composed only of mental energy. Traveling through this plane changes a cutter, maybe forever.

Terrifying foes, great dangers, and fantastic treasures can be found in this mental realm. The githyanki, an ancient race of magical and mental power, remain the most infamous inhabitants, and rightfully so. No wise blood travels onto the Astral without being prepared for an encounter with these enigmatic creatures, and while they are best avoided, do they possess secrets that could send a well-lanned cutter to the dead-book?

Only a fool would ignore the other threats present on the Astral: horrible creatures such as the astral dreadnought or the terrifying mental storms known as psychic winds. Nevertheless, the dangers are worth the chance to explore the decaying, rocklike forms of the floating dead gods, or to find interesting realms such as the Swallowed City, the Living Sea, or the prison known as Pitiless.

✦ READING BE+WEEN +HE LINES ✦

As a canny basher reads through *A Guide to the Astral Plane*, he'll keep a few things in mind. Terms and concepts like space, distance, time, movement, body, and even plane itself are relative to this strange mental realm – they exist only as perceptions, not as reality. This means that although a body'll find references to distances or measurements (for example) in this work, on the Astral Plane there is no such thing. Even the term "Astral Plane" is a technical misnomer. The first chapter called "The Spaces Between: Astral Space and Time" will attempt to explain all this – but a body should try to remember it while reading all the rest as well.

For ease of understanding – for terrestrial beings have difficulty in comprehending a truly non-terrestrial setting – sometimes incorrect or inappropriate terms such as "up" and "down" are used to describe the Astral Plane. A canny reader will pick up on these references and recognize them for what they are.

The Spaces Between: Astral Space and Time

Want to truly know the Astral Plane, berk? Take two thin sticks and spread them about a foot apart. Then, brings them within six inches of each other – about half the distance they previously were apart. After that, move them to half the distance again – three inches apart – and then again, and again, until they almost touch. Then imagine half the space that separates the sticks, and then half that, and again and again until the distance is virtually infinitesimally small. The sticks will never actually touch, because as they move together, they must first cross half the distance, and then half the remaining space, and then half that, and so on into infinity. See, between everything, there is a space – in some cases a space so small that it can only be imagined and never seen. The Astral Plane is somewhere within that space.

How can that be? How can anything – let alone a whole infinite plane – fit into literally no space? Simple. The Astral's not a place. It has nothing to do with space at all. It's a realm of the mind. That's why even though there is no distance to measure or space to occupy, it appears that there is. It's all a matter of perspective – or rather, perception. The mind sees distance, feels space around it, and perceives what it thinks is a plane.

AS+RAL PLANE?
⊕H, YES.
THA+'S WHERE A SPELLCAS+ER G⊕ES
+⊕ FLY AB⊕U+ LIKE A GH⊕S+,
RIGH+.

— S⊕ME⊕NE GIVING EVEN +HE CLUELESS A BAD NAME

This is because no matter where a body goes, he's on a plane, right? Wrong. A person can leave the planes. When he's not on a plane, he's on the Astral. The Astral is not like the Beastlands or the Plane of Ooze. It's certainly not like the Prime Material. In fact, it's not really a plane at all. It's not a plane, it has no space – it is the absence of space, the absence of a plane. It is the void between all true spaces. (For the purposes of this book, as well as all other PLANESCAPE products, the Astral will still be referred to as a "plane," as opposed to the unwieldy term "nonspacial nonplane.")

Many think of the Astral as a means to get from one plane to another – and they're not far off, or at least originally they weren't. If a body supposes for a moment (depending on her beliefs and faction) that an intelligent force created the multiverse, then it's safe to say that the force never actually intended for anyone to ever go to the Astral. The conduits are there for a purpose (which'll be covered later), and beyond them, there is nothing to see. Then some berk flubbed a *plane shift* or some such and wound up physically traveling to the Astral Plane. Despite the fact that it had no dimensions of space (no true width, height, or depth), the berk perceived there to be such and "saw" things within the Silver Void.

This describes what happened when the first basher (whoever he was) physically entered the Astral Plane. Physically? Well, that's what it's called. What really happened was that his body was "translated" into its astral equivalent, as all matter is "translated" when it "physically" enters the plane. (See the section "Getting to the Astral" for more information on translation.)

Something physical can't truly exist where no space exists, at least not as most people look at existing. Instead, it becomes a kind of mental energy that exhibits the same sorts of properties that normal matter does on a real plane.

At this point, however, a body should remember that until someone stumbled onto it, no one lived on the Astral. (The githyanki, the Astral's most infamous natives, aren't natives at all.) The Astral was just what the rest of the multiverse was built upon – the scaffolding of the universe, a body might say. Another might call it the mental realm of conscious foundation that forms and supports the underpinnings of concepts like space and even time. It's the backstage area that no one was ever meant to see.

✦ THE ASTRAL TO A NEWCOMER ✦

Considering that the Astral connects all of the Outer Planes and the Prime Material as well, it's surprising that most planewalkers never actually go there. Sure, a planewalker will take a ride through a conduit, but a body doesn't even realize that she's on the Astral in that sort of quick trip. The long and the short of it is that even some of the most experienced bloods only know what the Astral's like on hearsay, and even those that've been there have just scooted through from one color pool to the next, without paying much heed to anything around them.

As a body enters the Astral, whether she's coming through a portal or traveling astrally using a spell or device, he'll most likely be awed by the immensity of what he sees. Ironically, it will appear as though he can see the void going on forever. The color of the plane has often been likened to the glistening shine of a dew-covered spider's web. This silvery space is occasionally punctuated by what someone (particularly someone from the Prime) might take for large stars. These points of randomly scattered lights fill the glistening sky, which stretches above, below, and all around the traveler.

There's no gravity, no up or down, and no north or south. A body moves through space just as she moves his arm – simply by thinking about it (see the chapter called "Racing Through Nothing: Astral Movement"). There's no air to breathe, but there's no need to breathe, either (or eat, for that matter) – but a body still needs to sleep, since this is a function of the mind.

The Astral is virtually always deafeningly quiet and disturbingly still. No wind, no noise, and no obvious signs of life present themselves to the newcomer. Only if a body shows up near a conduit will she see anything move. Conduits appear as long, spectral tubes winding out of sight in either direction. They vibrate, pitch, and whip about, as if responding to an unseen, unfelt wind.

WHAT'S THERE AND NOT THERE

Is the Astral a completely empty void? Well, almost. The aforementioned conduits wind their way through the plane. Color pools, which are tiny holes marked by two-dimensional disks of color allowing a body to pass out of (and sometimes onto) the Astral and onto (or from) another plane, also dot the place. Strange astral energies, invisible to a normal basher's sight and beyond the comprehension of many who can see them, flow through the void –

occasionally making their presence known through some strange effect. Finally, islands exist in the endless sea of Astral "space." These usually consist of chunks of rock and earth pulled in from another plane, but sometimes – just sometimes – an island is really the body of a dead god, come to its final resting place.

Creatures exist on the plane, too – monstrosities like the astral dreadnought, or passive creatures like the astral whales and streakers. The githyanki are the most prevalent and infamous creatures of the plane, and a race of more evil cutters a body'll never find. 'Course, there's always the travelers who make their way through the Astral on their way somewhere else (or even the rare berks that have made the Silver Void their home). Chances of running into any other living thing in this huge void are pretty low, but it can happen.

What a body won't find is a lot of cities (there are a few), terrain features like forests, mountains, or rivers, and berks feuding over borders and territories. The Astral's just not like that. It's not about space – there isn't any, really – and it's not about things. What it's about is mind. Thoughts, perceptions, memories, emotions, and dreams fuel the Astral's fires. Even the winds of the Silver Void blow with such things.

There's one more thing a body won't find there – berks peering into the Prime or other planes like ghosts peering into the land of the living. That's the Ethereal Plane, friend, and a top-shelf planewalker won't get them confused. The Ethereal Plane has the Border Ethereal, where a body can move about the space of another plane where the two "cross over," creeping about like a noncorporeal spook. The Astral is a more esoteric place. It's a realm of the mind, not a place of ghosts.

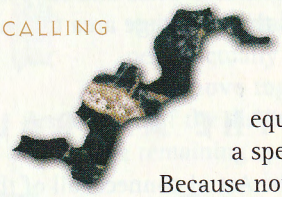
ASTRAL PLANE?
OH, YEAH.
THAT'S THE PLACE
BETWEEN US AND THEM.
NOTHING THERE
BUT CONDUITS
AND DEAD GODS.
HARDLY WORTH CALLING
A PLANE.

— SOMEONE SHOWING
THAT PLANARS
CAN BE AS BAD
AS THE CLUELESS

GETTING TO THE ASTRAL

Although many ways exist to get to (or perhaps, *onto*) the Astral, there are only two important distinctions. These differentiate between arriving astrally or physically. While it has already been pointed out that physical travel onto the Astral is a misnomer, nonetheless planars use it more commonly. Primes usually travel astrally via the *astral spell* or by using a psionic ability.

The differences between the two travel methods are both slight and profound. Astrally traveling characters project onto the plane a mental construct which is separate from, yet connected to, their physical body – which remains on their original plane. The connection takes the form of a silver cord that always visibly trails off from the midsection of the traveler (unless a body happens to be a planar). If the astral form receives a mortal wound, the traveler does not die. Instead his astral form dissipates, returning the consciousness of the traveler back to his body. If the silver cord is cut from an astrally traveling character, however, the character's astral and physical form die.



Essentially, the astrally traveling character has "translated" himself into his astral equivalent, or rather, a special form of such. Because nothing physical actually enters the Astral when a body is astrally traveling, he can take nothing with him, except magical items whose essence he can also translate.

Someone physically entering the plane lets the plane itself translate him and his equipment, thereby allowing *anything* material to enter the Astral. Nonetheless, the character's astral equivalent *can* be slain, for he leaves no body behind to return to like an astrally traveling character does.

Physically traveling onto the Astral can be accomplished by using a color pool (though a body almost always uses these to leave the plane rather than enter it), a portal, a *plane shift* spell, or any other method associated with planar travel.

Here's an important point, however. Just because it's a realm of the mind and physical things are really made of mental energies doesn't mean that whatever a berk thinks comes true. Not at all. Instead, physical things keep their *perceived* qualities, even in the astral form. Hard things feel hard, bitter things taste bitter, and so on. Perception is the key, but it is not the master. Just thinking about perceiving a sword does not make a sword appear. This isn't the plane of wishes. A berk's tiny mind just doesn't have that kind of power over the infinite Astral.

PLANAR GEOGRAPHY

The Astral touches the Prime Material Plane and every Outer Plane (at least their first layers). That said, a body must remember that the Astral doesn't really have any space of its own, so "touching" is a relative term. Perhaps it'd be better to say that the infinitesimal space of the Astral exists between all things on the Prime and Outer Planes.

But every berk knows where the Astral is and what it connects, right? It's the interplanar highway between all the Outer Planes. But why? Why does it "lie" where it does? Why can't a body use it to get to the Inner Planes, for example?

Well, that's simple. The Inner Planes embody physical reality. They're not concepts – they're the building blocks of reality. There's no room for the Astral among such dense stuff. No connection exists to the mental realm. The Astral links the mortals to the concepts that shape their consciousness, not to the fundamental elements that make up their worlds.

✦ ASTRAL SENSES ✦

How does a body see, feel, or hear in a realm where nothing exists? Normally, it would seem. Most visitors never notice any difference. Many don't even realize that the "plane" has no real dimensions or contents. This is because the mind will react to the "space" of the Astral, as well as the mentally translated objects within it, as if they were real, physical things. Things have the same appearance as they would on any other plane. Food brought with a planewalker still tastes the same (although eating is not required on the Astral); a knife still cuts flesh and causes pain. In fact, it is completely possible to die on the Astral Plane if one has traveled there physically. A translated sword can pierce a translated heart, and the mind of the victim still feels the pain and actually dies (see the chapter called "Mindwar: Astral Combat").

Since there truly is no up or down, a basher never gets lightheaded or dizzy from being "upside down." In fact, a traveler cannot become dizzy on the Astral, unless some magical effect or spell induces it. Additionally, without gravity, a body's sense of orientation is never going to be the same as anybody else's. No one orientation is correct, and it's easy to change placement so that a body's face is positioned about the same as another's. Communication is easiest that way (particularly if one relies on facial expressions), and the githyanki consider it good manners – although the lesser beings always changes their orientation to suit their betters. Sometimes it's a sign of respect, but sometimes it's one of weakness. They're a complicated people.

Range of sight on the Astral Plane is not very far, despite the fact that a body appears to be looking out into an endless void. Actual visual range is limited to about 200 yards. If something enters this range, it seems to fade into view out of nothingness. Likewise, sound only carries about 200 yards. Thing is, big stuff throws an astral wrench into all these rules. A body can see a large floating island or a dead god, or hear the bellow of some horrible beast, from much farther than this limiting range. How far? Well, that's never the same. It has to do with the size or volume of the stimulus. Since size and distance are meaningless concepts on the Astral anyway, who can say for sure how it works? Fact is, a large island or some such might be seen from a mile away, but the folks living on it won't be seen until a body gets in normal range. That's just the way the mind seems to work.

'Course, this applies only to the endless reaches of the Silver Void. On one of the strange astral islands or on the body of a dead god, things might very well work differently. Particularly when a body finds herself crawling about a power's corpse, anything can happen – many even seem to have gravity. Here's a good rule of thumb: If a body's on an astral island or within a confined space of some sort, she can see the thing as if she weren't on the Astral – even if it's bigger than the normal range of sight for the Astral. If it feels like there's gravity, then things work as though gravity's there. Like so many things on the Astral Plane, everything operates just like it seems it should. Some might say intuition is a governing law of reality on the Astral.

✦ ASTRAL TIME ✦

Much in the same way that the Astral has no real space, it also has no real time. Those within it perceive the passage of what seems to be time, but in fact, nothing ages or decays here, for no time truly passes.

Leatherheads who learn this fact immediately think of the Astral as a way to cheat time. Go to the Astral, wait a few thousand years, and then go back to their home plane, they think. The catch is, it doesn't work like that. When a visitor to the Astral leaves, all of the time that he missed instantly catches up with him. This means that if a 20-year-old human woman enters the Astral and stays for 50 years, she remains 20 the whole time in the Silver Void, but she instantly ages 50 years upon leaving, becoming a 70-year-old woman. Returning to the Astral Plane does not allow her to regain her youth, either. While time does not pass on the Astral (although the perception of time does exist), it does in the rest of the multiverse, and time can't be cheated. It all has to do with the translation to and from the mental form of the Astral and the physical form of the rest of the multiverse. It all has to do with perception.

Because of these temporal effects, most bashers don't eat while on the Astral (because no one gets hungry there). When time catches up after leaving the plane, a body's usually *real* hungry – though no one's ever died of starvation, even if they've been on the Astral for years. Canny restaurant owners have opened up establishments near gates to the Astral or known color pool sites and have earned hefty profits for their trouble.

Here's another thing a body should be aware of: If a basher has been poisoned in some way, it does not affect him until time catches up with him. In other words, the sod had better take care of deadly poison before leaving the Astral or it will put him in the dead-book before he can blink.

Speaking of health, since time doesn't exist here, a body can't heal naturally. If a berk gets nicked, then the wound will bleed almost naturally – at first. Once the damage is done, however, the wound will not scab up or heal in any way. Instead, the cut will gape open, weeping blood and causing great annoyance, pain, and perhaps disgust (but no further damage) to the berk. The only way to heal wounds of any kind on the Astral is by magic. So, if a body plans to travel to the Astral, then he should remember to bring along a few healing spells and potions!

Racing Through Nothing: Astral Movement

Te-Renaur spiraled down toward his companions, the githyanki warriors close behind him. Concentrating on nothing but moving, Te-Renaur increased his speed as he felt his foes closing in on him. They were much faster than he – but at least they didn't have one of those sodding astral ships of theirs. As they had planned, just before reaching his comrades – just as they came into view – he stopped suddenly, though it took all the mental effort he could muster to do so. The githyanki were caught by surprise and sped by him, into the waiting blades of Te-Renaur's fellow travelers.

Movement through the Astral Plane differs from what most folks are used to. There's no walking, running, flying, or swimming here (at least, not for the most part – see below). Moving's not a physical thing. It's all done with the mind. If a body just thinks about where she wants to go, she's on her way. The smarter she is, the faster she moves. A body's Intelligence score, multiplied by 30 feet, is the distance she can travel in a single round. Another way to figure this out is that the Intelligence score is the movement rate of the character. Nonintelligent creatures or those with no mind of their own (such as zombies, golems, etc.) cannot move on the Astral. But here's a warning to those traveling through: When compared to the githyanki, masters of movement within the Astral Plane, most outsiders move mind-numbingly slow. Githyanki have a movement rate of 96 while on the Astral.

✦ Astral Maneuvers ✦

Movement on the Astral Plane is the epitome of fluidity. Even the clumsiest berk can look graceful if he's got half a brain. Think it and go. A traveler can perform complex actions while moving, since moving takes no physical coordination or exertion – just a tiny bit of concentration. Flying, either through magical means or wings, however, does not aid in astral movement in any way.

HEY, WHY YOU MOVE SO FASTER THAN DROUG? DROUG SUPPOSED TO BE FASTER THAN LITTLE FRIEND-MAGE.

— DROUG, A HALF-OGRE NEW TO THE WAYS OF THE ASTRAL

Maneuvers such as rapid pivots, high-speed swoops, loops, and sudden changes of direction are possible, but they always require a successful Intelligence ability check. Stopping suddenly always requires such a check, although if the mover takes a full round to slow down before finally stopping, no check is required. If the mover fails his check, he automatically slows before stopping.

One thing that makes astral maneuvers easier is that there is no momentum on this plane. A traveler moves exactly as he wants – he doesn't have to know anything about physics to move about. Likewise, no centripetal force exists to throw a body's balance off as he's looping head over heels to strike at his foes in battle. Instead, thinking creatures provide their own locomotion,

and nonthinking objects move when propelled by a force acting upon them (such as a body throwing a ball). What this really means is that only mental force of will can make anything move on the Astral. Once given this initial impetus, however, a nonthinking object will continue to move until it strikes something.

So then, how far a body can throw an object and have a chance to hit a target depends upon his Intelligence rather than Strength. Refer to the "Mindwar: Astral Combat" chapter for guidelines on how to determine missile weapon ranges. As a rule of thumb, though, a body can throw, shoot, or push an object twice as far on the Astral as on an earthly plane, but when needed, Intelligence should be consulted rather than the Strength score.

What makes astral maneuvers (and movement altogether) more difficult is the short range of sight. A basher can only see 200 yards ahead of himself, but he can travel almost that far in a single round (if he's really intelligent). This means that if he's not careful and paying strict attention, he could accidentally collide with something because he was unable to stop after it came into his view.

✦ MENTAL DRAG ✦

If a basher tosses a dart on the Astral, it keeps going forever until it hits something, right? So, then, if that basher gets himself moving, he'll keep moving, even if he goes to sleep, right?

Wrong. Why? It's like this. A nonthinking object has a mental force behind it to keep it moving. A thinking being is always thinking, even if unconscious or sleeping. If no conscious part of the traveler's mind is thinking about moving (even a tiny bit), the other extraneous thoughts, dreams, etc. will begin to slow the sod down. These extraneous thoughts create a kind of mental drag in the same way air and gravity drag on an object moving on a terrestrial plane. Unless something is consciously acting upon the object to move, the extraneous thoughts will eventually bring a basher to a stop.

Just as a wagon won't move while the horses are asleep, an astral traveler has to keep at least a little bit of conscious concentration to propel himself through the void. 'Course, if a berk's got no thoughts at all, he'll move forever just like any object – but he's got to be in the dead-book for that trick to work.

✦ ENCUMBRANCE ✦

Just as Intelligence determines the rate at which characters can move on the Astral Plane, so too does it determine how much they can carry. For all practical purposes, Intelligence equates to Strength in the Silver Void. To determine how much a basher can carry while on the Astral, use his Intelligence score on the Strength table in the *Player's Handbook*. For example, a body with an Intelligence of 11 has a weight allowance of 40 pounds. Additionally, his maximum press is 115 pounds, he has a 6 in 20

chance of opening a stuck or heavy door, and he has a 2% chance to bend bars (the last two being uncommon tasks on the Astral). Outside of space and time, brains are not merely more powerful than brawn, they *are* brawn.

Carrying a great deal of weight can encumber a character on the Astral, slowing him down just like anywhere else. One major difference is, however, that any magical item is considered (for the purposes of figuring encumbrance) weightless. Some graybeards speculate that since magic pervades the Astral Plane (see the chapter called "Spellwarp: Astral Magic"), magical items lose the weight that drags them down and become wholly magic. This doesn't mean that any character can move an entire enchanted castle effortlessly. A cutter can't move *anything* that's too heavy for him, based on his Intelligence. If he carries a magical item or weapon, however, it doesn't count against the weight limit he's allowed.

✦ MOVING SILENTLY ✦

Since there's no air, movement makes no sound (not even a "whoosh!"). This means it's really easy to sneak up on someone. A character can move through the plane without actually making any physical movements. That is, without moving a body's arms, legs, or whatever, he can still move from one place to another – so, body rigid, moving through the plane, a traveler makes absolutely no noise even when wearing metal armor or carrying a bag full of gold coins. The downside is, if a body is spotted while trying to move in quietly, there's no cover or shadows to hide behind. So, a rogue's move silently ability is virtually always 100% (some DMs may wish to rule that it is 99%, always allowing for a small chance of error), but his hide in shadows chance is almost always 0%.

Dungeon Masters should note that all characters, even those in heavy metal armor, have the ability to move silently at 100% (or 99% at DM's discretion), since without gravity, air resistance, or momentum, armor never makes a sound unless the character purposefully moves in such a way to make noise. So in the Silver Void, it takes no skill or knowledge to move silently – in fact, just the opposite.

✦ INCREASING SPEED ✦

By focusing all attention and willpower toward movement, a body can increase his maximum movement rate as he moves through the Astral. By concentrating – that is, performing no actions other than moving – a character (and creatures such as the astral dreadnought) can move three times faster than normal. This brings an intelligent basher within the same league as the githyanki, although the githyanki are still going to be considerably faster. A githyanki's movement rate of 96 cannot be increased by concentrating, fortunately for everyone else on the plane. That may very well be as fast as a mind can move on the plane.

Maneuvers at tripled speeds are more difficult. Any attempts at sudden stops, loops, etc. are made with a -2 penalty on an Intelligence check.

Long-term concentration to move faster fatigues a basher mentally. A body can only keep up such a stressful focus for a number of rounds equal to ten times the character's Constitution score. After such a time, the cutter must rest his weary mind (basically by sleeping or resting without focusing his mind) for at least a number of rounds equal to his Constitution score.

A planewalker who's increased his speed to its maximum begins to slow down as soon as he ceases the intense concentration required to reach that velocity. This is because of the mental drag described above. If any part of a traveler's mind thinks about something other than moving, it slows him down. Thus, a cutter can perform all the actions he wants while moving at his standard movement rate, but can do nothing when at this increased speed.

✦ ASTRAL SHIPS ✦

Due to the aeons of time that they spent there, the githyanki are so adept at astral movement that they have learned how to create and power craft that move through the Astral. The advantage in this is not speed, but carrying capacity. With two githyanki concentrating on moving the specially constructed ship, it can move almost as fast as an unburdened githyanki (movement rate of 75), and it can carry up to ten tons of cargo (or more for the bigger ships, though they require more crewmen concentrating). Conscious githyanki passengers do *not* count against this total weight, but githyanki who are asleep or nongithyanki passengers do add to the total weight carried.

Githyanki who concentrate on moving the astral ship become mentally fatigued after focusing on moving the ship for ten rounds per point of Constitution. For this reason, these ships carry enough githyanki to take shifts.

✦ NONMENTAL MOVEMENT ✦

There might be times when a body doesn't want to move by using her mind but wants to use more physical means. While this is possible, it's really a misconception. Everything that a basher does on the Astral uses her mind. It's just a matter of perception. How she perceives she's moving is the important thing here.

Anyway, when a body wants to perceive that she's moving physically, it's still a strange experience on the Astral. With no grav-

ity, no air, and no other forces acting against the mover, it's easy to move – assume the mover's got something to act against, like a floor to walk on or water to swim through.

PUSHING OFF ANOTHER OBJECT

It's possible for a cutter to move without directly using his mind on the Astral. Though it's questionable as to why anyone'd want to do it, this technique is best accomplished by pushing off a larger object, such as one of the floating islands or an astral ship. It can also occur as an incidental result of other activities. Exactly how fast a body moves depends on size and Intelligence. Rules for the various situations are as follows:

- A large object pushing off a small object moves 10 feet per round, regardless of the movement of the smaller object. For example, if a body fires an arrow, he moves 10 feet per round in the direction opposite to the arrow's movement.
- Two similarly sized objects pushing off each other each move at a speed equal to half the total Intelligence involved. Therefore, a body with an Intelligence of 12 pushing off a rock has a movement rate of 6 (180 feet per round) – and so does the rock. Two men with Intelligence scores of 12 pushing off each other have a movement rate of 12 (360 feet per round) in opposite directions.
- A small object pushing off a large object moves at a speed equal to the pusher's Intelligence. A body with an Intelligence of 12 who pushes off a floating island has a movement rate of 12. The island would then move at a rate of 10 feet per round in the opposite direction.

All of these rates of movement can be instantly negated by force of will. If an archer doesn't want to be moved back when he fires his arrow and states that he is concentrating on such, he does not move. If not stopped by any other force, the force of mental drag (described above) will bring an intelligent being to a halt in 1d8 rounds.

CLIMBING

While exploring the huge rocklike body of a dead god, or alongside some slab of matter pulled in from the Prime, it may be beneficial to an explorer to move along a surface as though he's climbing. This is actually quite easy. Since there's no gravity, nothing pulls the climber "down." Climbing in such a manner can be accomplished without any chance of failure.

But here's the catch. There're a few places on the Astral that exert gravity or a gravitylike pull (including some of the god corpses). In such places, characters have normal chances for climbing success, with an additional bonus of twice their Intelligence score added to the percentage chance. Rate of movement is normal for climbing. This is the Astral, after all, and mental prowess always counts for something.

SWIMMING

There are not many opportunities to swim on the Astral Plane, but they do exist. For example, a vast expanse of water called the Living Sea floats through the Astral Plane. A character entering this strange ocean must swim through it. A swimmer performs the action according to the rules provided in the *Player's Handbook,* but instead of using his normal movement rate to figure out his swimming rate, he must use his Intelligence-based movement rate. For example, a swimmer with an Intelligence of 14 would first halve this rate (14 divided by 2 equals 7) then multiply by 10 yards (7 multiplied by 10 yards equals 70). This particular swimmer can swim 75 yards (or 210 feet) per round. This method of figuring out swimming rates should be used even for creatures native to the Living Sea and any other bodies of water on the Astral.

"GRAVITY"

There're places – on some of the dead gods, a few strange astral realms, and so on – where it seems as if there is gravity. When in such a situation, things work as they would on a terrestrial plane. Suddenly, there *is* an up and a down; walking, running, and flying are possible; and a launched arrow doesn't fly forever. These regions are rare, but comforting to those leatherheads who can't get the hang of the Silver Void.

LONG-DISTANCE MOVEMENT

All of the above types of movement and maneuvers concern small areas, such as in a combat or around (and in) a structure. Over long distances, astral movement becomes more abstract. Travel time is based not on distance (for really, there is no distance on the Astral). Instead, it is based – like everything – on the mind, and how well a body knows the destination.

It takes the following travel times to move from one point on the Astral to another:

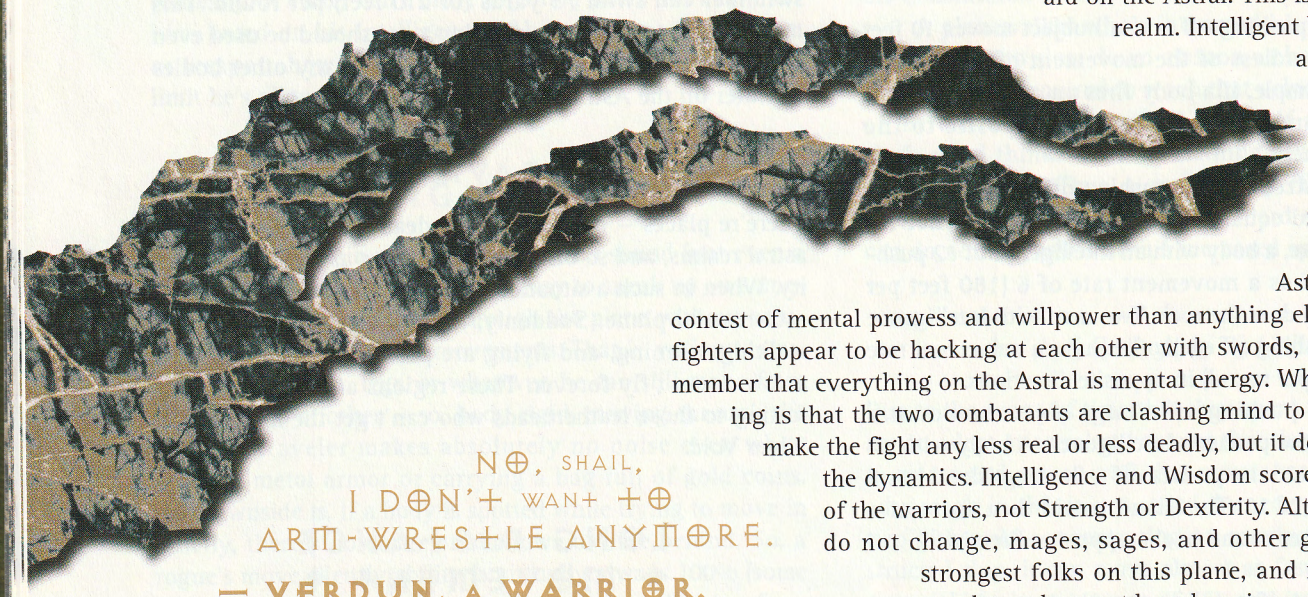
- 6 + 1d6 hours to travel to a known color pool
- 6 × 1d4 hours to travel to an unknown color pool
- 10 × 1d4 hours to travel to any location visited before
- 20 × 1d6 hours to travel to any location described to the traveler in detail
- 50 × 1d10 hours to travel to any location that's never been described or visited before

As a body can see from the above travel times, it is almost always easier to find a way out of the Astral (a color pool) than to find something on the Astral. Graybeards use this to support the idea that beings were never supposed to be there in the first place.

MINDWAR: ASTRAL COMBAT

"Deinoth, you sodding little piker! If we weren't on the Astral, I'd be sorely stronger than you, and my claymore'd cleave you from helm to pelvis 'fore you ever even breathed the first word of a spell. Your big brain-box wouldn't make you so high and mighty on the Prime!"
– Skoor, a mighty barbarian, unhappy that he's fighting on the Astral

"We aren't on the Prime, are we? Clueless sod."
– Deinoth, a wizard, happy that he is



NO, SHAIL, I DON'T WANT TO ARM-WRESTLE ANYMORE.
— VERDUN, A WARRIOR, TO HIS WIZARD COMPANION ON THE ASTRAL

There's no two ways about it – it's good to be a wizard on the Astral. This is a mental, magical realm. Intelligent bloods have all the advantages, and big hulking brutes have none. Brawn yields nothing in the Silver Void.

Combat on the Astral Plane is more a contest of mental prowess and willpower than anything else. Even when two fighters appear to be hacking at each other with swords, a body's got to remember that everything on the Astral is mental energy. What's really happening is that the two combatants are clashing mind to mind. This doesn't make the fight any less real or less deadly, but it does change some of the dynamics. Intelligence and Wisdom scores dictate the might of the warriors, not Strength or Dexterity. Although appearances do not change, mages, sages, and other graybeards are the strongest folks on this plane, and nimble thieves will see themselves outdone by wizened old clerics. Youth confers no benefits over age here – experience and genius are the tools of the mighty.

So is astral combat the same as psionics? When two bashers fight psionically on the Prime, do they project themselves as warriors on the Astral? Technically yes, though this isn't the tome to discuss it. It's interesting to note, however, that if a cutter uses psionics *on* the Silver Void, it becomes the astral equivalent to a physical attack or action. The effects remain the same, but the whole experience is more visual. An ego whip, for example, becomes an actual whip. A body'll find more on psionics in a book called *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills and Powers,* if he's interested.

✦ ABILITY SCORES ✦

Translated into creatures of pure mental energy, either by spell or by the plane itself, characters on the Astral Plane resemble their physical selves in appearance only. Astral bodies differ in many ways. Various ability scores change in what they represent. Only Charisma remains unchanged.

INTELLIGENCE AND STRENGTH

As a construct of mental astral energies, a basher finds that Intelligence dictates his might. It's simple – folks possessing strong, sharp mental abilities are

powerful bloods, and addlecoves are out-of-luck pikers. A character's Intelligence score takes the place of his Strength score to determine attack and damage bonuses (or penalties), as well as carrying capacity, ability to bend bars/lift gates, and so on. Any action that would normally require a Strength ability check should use Intelligence instead.

Intelligence as an ability score and game mechanic now takes over Strength's function in the game. Essentially, while on the Astral, a character's Strength score means nothing.

WISDOM AND DEXTERITY

Like physical might, nimble fingers or fast feet aren't going to help a cutter in a jam on the Astral. Here, where everyone's a construct of mental energies, it's a character's Wisdom and sense which translate into quick action and deft precision.

Instead of the Dexterity score, use a character's Wisdom to determine her Armor Class, missile attack, and reaction adjustments. This reflects the Astral's focus on a character's mental experience and developed intuition rather than physical agility.

CONSTITUTION

While as a game mechanic Constitution remains unchanged, on the Astral Plane it represents a character's stamina in regard to mental fatigue and stress rather than physical hardiness.

Likewise, a character's hit points are a measurement of mental fortitude on the Astral, not the actual amount of bodily punishment a basher can take. In game terms, hit points still serve the same function, but the idea behind them differs slightly.

✦ INITIATIVE ✦

Movement on the Astral is fluid and graceful, and this is never more evident than in combat. Moving with the speed of thought, combatants strike at one another with weapons and spells. More than on a physical plane, astral combat depends on the participants' ability to analyze the situation and mentally cope with their foes' rapid actions.

On the Astral Plane, all weapons have a weapon speed factor of 3, regardless of size or weight. This is because they are all constructs of mental energy and represent a focused attack of psychic force more than an actual sword or battle axe. Because of their reaction to the inherent magic of the Astral Plane, magical weapons are an exception to this rule. Magical weapons strike with even greater force and speed. Enchanted weapons have a speed factor of 1. Only in one of the unnatural gravity-filled environments of the Astral (these are quite rare) should a DM require use of standard weapon speed factors, and even then, magical weapons should be treated as if they have a factor of 1. Even in an environment of unnatural gravity, combatants' minds will begin to believe that the force of gravity affects their weapons' speeds and usability, even though it technically is not true.

The Astral also affects spellcasting times. This magical plane is one in which spells are easily cast, with somatic gestures flowing smoothly and verbal components rolling off a body's tongue. All spells have their casting time reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1. Spells with casting times of a round or greater are always treated as having a casting time of one round — never more.

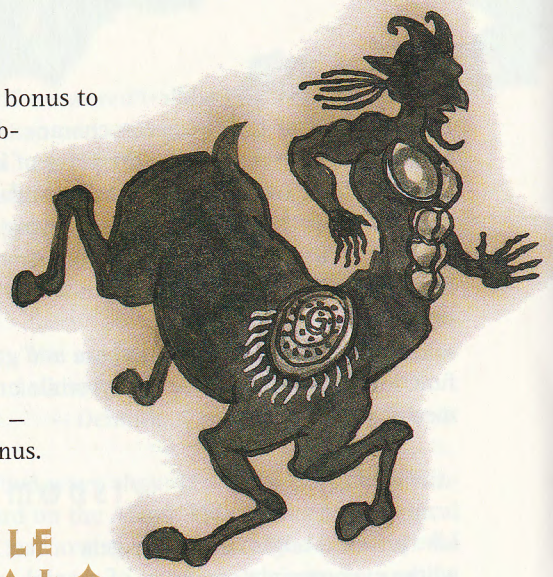
Moreover, intuition and experience play a great role in astral combat, so a high Wisdom score is a significant boon. The magical defense adjustment that is derived from the Wisdom score should be used as a helpful modifier in determining initiative. That is, if a basher has an adjustment of +2 for having a Wisdom of 16, he should better (lessen) his initiative by 2. So, a character who rolls a 4 for his initiative dice, adds 3 for weapon speed factor (total of 7), but has a Wisdom score of 17 (magical defense adjustment of +3) would have a net initiative of 4 (4 + 3 - 3 = 4). 'Course a low Wisdom score may yield a penalty to initiative (consult Table 5: Wisdom in Chapter 1 of the *Player's Handbook*).

✦ MELEE COMBAT ✦

In addition to changes to initiative, the conditions of the Astral alter melee combat in a few ways. Because of the fluidity of movement, weapon reach is relatively unimportant. A cutter with a dagger can duck in to attack a berk with a battle axe, and the axeman can scoot back to swing his weapon. Since there is so much room (in all three dimensions) to maneuver, and movement is a function of thought, such actions are no problem. Only in tight quarters, such as within a structure, should such considerations ever be taken into account.

Overall, melee combat on the Astral usually involves a great deal more movement (since movement is so easy) than on a more terrestrial plane. A typical fight might have one warrior moving in to attack, swinging his weapon, and then quickly backing away. The other combatant may then follow, striking as they both move. An average battle may move hundreds of feet during its course. A longer combat may go farther. This activity can result in warriors losing their comrades (since range of sight is not terribly far). Well-trained astral warriors, such as the githyanki, know never to allow themselves to get too far from their fellows. These same troops will sometimes try to isolate their foes (or perhaps, one particularly important foe) and then converge on the individuals in greater number.

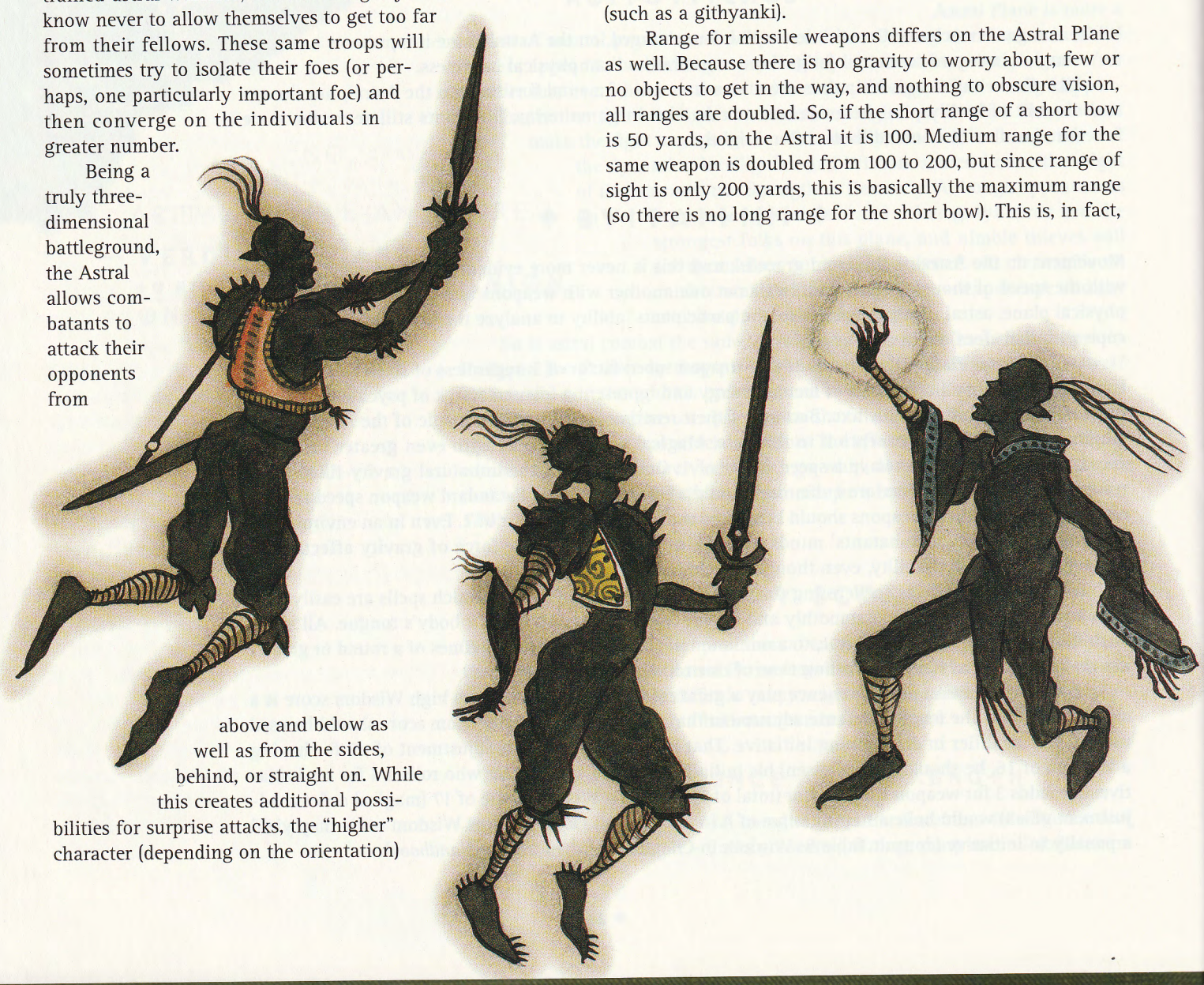
Being a truly three-dimensional battleground, the Astral allows combatants to attack their opponents from above and below as well as from the sides, behind, or straight on. While this creates additional possibilities for surprise attacks, the "higher" character (depending on the orientation) usually gains a +1 bonus to his attack rolls (subject to DM approval). If the characters have different orientations altogether – so that each seems to be "above" the other, for example – neither gains a bonus.



MISSILE ✦ COMBAT ✦

Combat that uses missile weapons is very hard on the Astral Plane. Even for a strong mind, it is difficult to fire an arrow or launch a spear accurately while floating in a gravity-free environment. All missile attacks are subject to a –2 attack roll penalty unless the combatant is a native of the Astral (such as a githyanki).

Range for missile weapons differs on the Astral Plane as well. Because there is no gravity to worry about, few or no objects to get in the way, and nothing to obscure vision, all ranges are doubled. So, if the short range of a short bow is 50 yards, on the Astral it is 100. Medium range for the same weapon is doubled from 100 to 200, but since range of sight is only 200 yards, this is basically the maximum range (so there is no long range for the short bow). This is, in fact,



the maximum effective range for all weapons. Essentially, this means that for most weapons all targets fall within short or medium range.

Ranges of weapons on the Astral are *effective ranges*. This is how far away the target can be and still be effectively targeted. Missile weapons, once fired, thrown, or launched, continue moving on the Astral until they strike something or another force acts upon them. See the chapter "Racing Through Nothing: Astral Movement" for more details.

✦ RESULTS OF COMBAT ✦

Old battlefields on the Astral do not resemble battlefields on physical planes. For one thing, nothing decays on the Astral Plane, so slain corpses do not decompose. Even blood sprays continue to float in tiny spherical globules.

Leftover weapons either abandoned by their former owners or wielded by those who have long since been slain float forever through the void. Launched arrows continue on their trajectories forever. Floating astral battlefields are strange, unfamiliar, and even dangerous places. Don't forget the story of Dagros Iran'ild, who was killed on the Astral by a stray sling bullet – launched years before in a far-off battle – that had never stopped moving through the Silver Void.

ATTRACTING CREATURES

Astral combats have a way of drawing the attention of the few astral predators and scavengers that roam the plane looking for food. They know that such events leave corpses behind. These astral creatures don't simply look or listen for the combat, but rather sense them psychically. On this mental plane, strong emotions – like those displayed in combat – can be detected by those that know how, the same way that sharks sense blood in an earthly ocean.

ATTRACTING ENERGIES

For reasons still unknown, combat also draws some of the strange astral energies to the area. These energies, which flow and permeate the Astral, have a wide range of effects. No one truly understands these energies enough to explain or predict them – except perhaps some of the learned githyanki. Although this occurrence happens in only 1 out of 100 battles, the results can often change the flow of an existing battle or alter the actions of those who thought it was over. The energies appear without warning 1d6 rounds after a battle has begun.

While there are too many to be documented, some of the energy effects that have been encountered include the following:

- ATTRACTION: Several people or objects (roll 1d4 to determine how many) involved in the battle gain an attractive quality, drawing all other objects toward them as if they suddenly were the center of gravity. The range of the attraction is only a dozen feet or less, but the force equals a Strength of 15. Other beings with an Intelligence score (for remember, Intelligence *is* Strength on the Astral) of less than 15 must make successful ability checks (with a penalty of –1 for every 3 points less than 15) or be drawn towards the object. Nonthinking objects automatically move toward the attracting object unless held tightly by a resisting mind. This effect lasts for 2d10 minutes.
- REPULSION: This is identical to the attraction effect, except it works in reverse. The objects or people affected repulse objects within 12 feet with a Strength of 15. While thinking beings making a successful Intelligence check (as above) resist, those affected are pushed away at a movement rate of 15 as though they pushed off a large object (see the chapter called "Racing Through Nothing: Astral Movement").
- DECAY: Several nonliving, nonmagical objects (roll 1d6 to determine how many) in the battle decay, becoming unusable. This occurs at a rate of one object per round and cannot be resisted in any known way. Metal rusts and pits, wood and leather rots, and so on. On the Astral, where nothing decays, this can be a surprising and disconcerting event. The effects are permanent.
- SLEEP: All thinking beings involved in the battle must make successful saving throws versus paralyzation or be rendered unconscious and unable to be roused for 2d10 rounds.
- IMMOBILITY: Several people or objects (roll 1d4 to determine how many) become completely, totally immovable for 2d10 rounds. No amount of Intelligence, force, or magic can make the object move from where it rests in the void.

Interestingly, a githyanki hr'a'cknir, who deals with and shapes astral energies, can ward off these energies and remove their effects (even the decaying effect) given a full round of concentration.

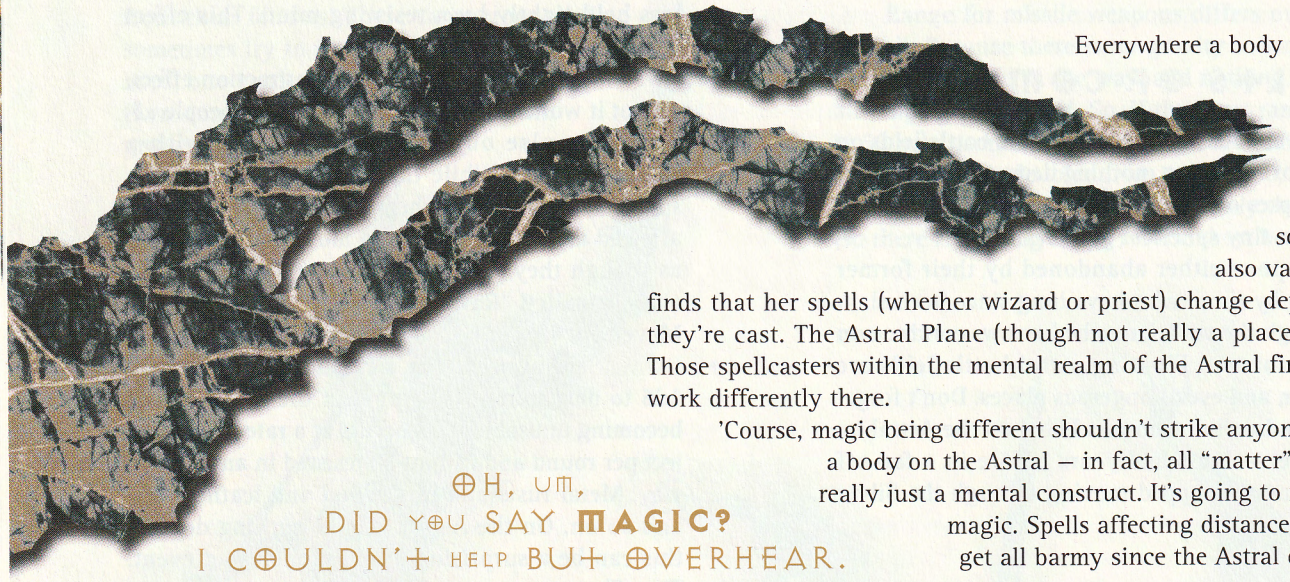
Spellwarp: Astral Magic

Astral.
Lost.
In my mind, or someone else's.
Shadows creep all around me, of thoughts I've never had
and spells I've never cast.

Magic.
Remnants.
Does it work, or am I betrayed?
Shadows creep all around me, of things I've never seen
and words I've never spoken.

Escape.
Found.
Is it real, or again illusion?
Shadows creep all around me, of choices I've never made
and lives I've never lived.

– Poem found scrawled on a wall in Sigil, near a portal to the Astral. Chant has it that shortly after it was written, a number of sods were put in the dead-book by an insane spellcasting murderer, thought to roam the streets of the Hive to this day.



Everywhere a body goes, magic works differently. It's one of the laws of the multiverse. Every place differs, and so magic used there also varies. A spellslinger finds that her spells (whether wizard or priest) change depending on where they're cast. The Astral Plane (though not really a place) is no exception. Those spellcasters within the mental realm of the Astral find that their spells work differently there.

'Course, magic being different shouldn't strike anyone as strange, since a body on the Astral – in fact, all "matter" on the Astral – is really just a mental construct. It's going to react differently to magic. Spells affecting distance or movement also get all barmy since the Astral doesn't really have any space.

OH, UM,
DID YOU SAY **MAGIC?**
I COULDN'T HELP BUT OVERHEAR.
YOU SEE, I REALLY,
AH . . . **REALLY** LIKE MAGIC.
DO YOU, AH . . .
WELL, HAVE SOME?

— SHAIL, A WIZARD THAT'S SPENT A LITTLE TOO MUCH TIME ON THE ASTRAL

Overall, however, magic is even more potent in the Silver Void. This is a magical place. In fact, aside from mental energies and other strange unknown (and some unknowable) astral energies, magic is the only thing that can exist on the Astral. On the Astral, physical things translate into mental constructs while magical things translate into magic. While astral energies are not magical in the strictest sense, uninformed berks cannot distinguish them from the stuff of actual enchantment. In fact, due to a flaw in the *detect magic* spell, these energies detect as magic, and since to some extent they pervade the plane, so does everything encountered there. DMs should decide whether other methods of detecting magic are also foiled on a case-by-case basis, although most probably should be.

EXTRADIMENSIONAL SPACES ✦ (AND THE LACK THEREOF) ✦

Being outside of real space and time, the Astral lacks all dimension. Not surprisingly, then, it offers no access to extradimensional spaces commonly accessed by spells and magical items. The spells listed in Table I will not work because of this restriction. Likewise, the common magical items listed in Table I are also worthless pieces of junk while on the Astral.

Any similar item also will not work. As a general rule, if something is enchanted so that it is larger on the inside than the outside, it works by accessing extradimensional space, and thus fails when on the Astral (although not always – the DM has final say in this matter).

TABLE I: SPELLS AND MAGICAL ITEMS ACCESSING EXTRADIMENSIONAL SPACE

Spells	Items
Deeppockets	*Bag of devouring*
*Extradimensional detection**	*Bag of holding*
*Extradimensional manipulation**	*Bag of transmuting*
*Extradimensional pocket**	*Girdle of many pouches*
Maze	*Heward's handy haversack*
Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion	*Mirror of life trapping*
Rope trick	*Portable hole*
*Seclusion**	*Pouch of accessibility*
*Transformation**	*Rod of security*

* These priest spells are only affected if cast from a scroll or a magical item.

ALTERATIONS TO ✦ OTHER SPELLS ✦

While spellcasting restrictions exist on the Astral Plane – due to its nature as well as its "location" in the planar scheme of things – most casters believe it to be an easy place to cast spells. The nonphysical environment fosters magical energies and spellcasting requirements. It may be the closest thing there is to a plane of magic.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

Magic dealing with only physical matter, such as the spell *disintegrate* or a *sphere of annihilation*, has no potency here. While other spells which may seem to be physical – such as *fireball* and *lightning bolt* – are translated by the nature of the Astral into mental energy equivalents, these effects are too overtly physical in nature to function on the

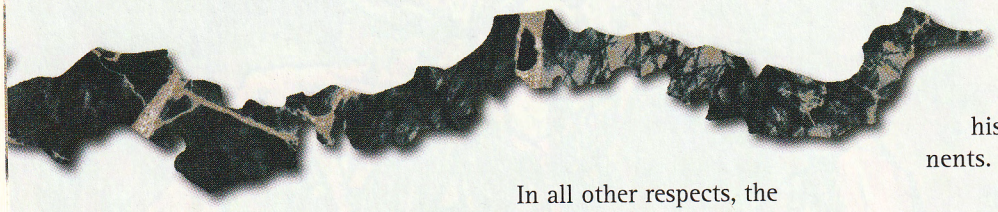
Astral. Likewise, the spells *there/not there, physical mirror, time stop,* and *reverse time* (as well as all time-related enchantments) do not function because of their link to physical reality or space and/or time. These spells, however, can function with the proper spell keys.

The lack of solid "ground," for the most part, puts logical limitations on spells like *dig, Evard's black tentacles, move earth, Tenser's floating disc,* and other spells requiring or affecting the ground or terrain (spell keys could fix problems faced by the last two examples, but not the first two). Likewise, the full 360-degree environment limits the usefulness of wall spells, whether they be made of fog, force, or prismatic energy.

Due to the magical nature of the plane, all spells are conducted through the mental medium with efficiency. Spell ranges are increased by 50% (although range of sight is still limited to only 200 yards). All spells have their casting times reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1, and those spells with casting times over a full round are reduced to a single round (no spell ever takes longer).

Because access to a foe's mind is more direct, all mind-influencing spells work better on the Astral Plane. Durations increase by 50%, and a –1 penalty is applied to saving throws (where applicable). *Feeblemind* effectively keeps the victim from moving, since Intelligence dictates movement.

As a special note, spellcasters should realize that *find the path* decreases long-distance travel times on the Astral by four hours (to a minimum of one hour). Its reverse, *lose the path,* adds four hours. *True sight* and similar magic (such as a *gem of seeing*) allows the caster to see with a more "normal" visual range, rather than the 200-yard limitation characteristic of the Astral Plane. However, the first time the viewer gazes into the endless void, there is a 100% chance minus 5% per level that the viewer will be overcome by the experience and be unable to act for 1d6 turns.



In all other respects, the Astral Plane is restricted, as are all Outer Planes, in regard to connection to the Ethereal Plane and those planes it reaches. Spell keys are required to access spells needing connections to these planes.

Alteration (✦). In general, alteration spells that deal with physical matter, time, and space are modified as described above. For example, *haste* and *slow* affect characters normally, except for movement. Since these spells do not affect the mind, movement rates are calculated as described in the chapter on astral movement.

Conjuration/Summoning (>). On the one hand, conjurations other than elemental summonings work very well: The Astral has efficient magical means of access to a number of other planes. For example, *monster summoning* spells can call creatures from the Prime, as well as any of the Outer Planes. However, there is a 25% chance that the magical summoning will fail altogether.

Illusion/Phantasm (✦). On the Astral, random thoughts blow around (see the chapter called "Mindstorms: Psychic Winds"). Because the Astral is such a mental realm, there is a 30% chance that illusions such as *phantasmal force* or *hallucinatory terrain* are usurped by these floating thoughts. For example, a spellslinger wishes to create an illusion of a red dragon, but an errant thought comes along and replaces the seed of the caster's illusion. Instead of having a red dragon show up, the caster is now staring at the illusion of someone working on the outside of a house.

Wild Magic (+). Wild magic functions as if it was cast one level higher than the spellslinger's actual level, and all saving throws against spells of this school are made at a –1 penalty.

Elemental (✦). More than any other plane, the Astral is cut off from the Inner Planes. The dense, unadulterated intensity of the elements there is the antithesis of the Astral Plane. No elemental can exist on the Astral, and there are no spell keys which allow a caster to change this. (This is not true of elemental effects, such as a burning torch or a *fireball.*)

Astrally Projecting Spellcasters

The only thing that physically distinguishes a spell-using character on the Astral as opposed to one using the *astral spell* is that an astrally projecting character must have somehow enchanted his material components before he came, because he can only bring magical objects with him. A physically traveling caster has all of his possessions, including his material components.

Spell Keys ✦ and Power Keys ✦

Spell keys usable on the Astral Plane take the form of mental exercises or states of mind. The caster must clear his mind of other thoughts and focus in a certain way in order for the spell to work. Like other spell keys, these methods of focusing thought are not obvious and require that the caster learn them from some source.

Due to the near-total lack of living deities on the plane, power keys on the Astral are unavailable, although those provided by nonastral powers function normally here if the power so desires.

✦ SPELLSHADOWS ✦

A unique feature of the Astral Plane, dark to all but the best-lanned bloods, is the presence of spellshadows. These are magical resonances left over when a spell is cast on a plane which borders the Astral. Some would call them the magical equivalent of psychic winds, but actually, they differ considerably in form and effect.

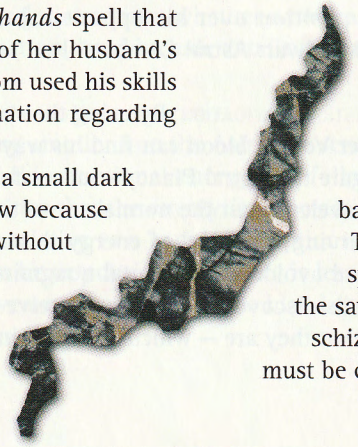
These leftover spell energies still carry with them much of the specific information regarding the spell. By knowing what to look for (and having the read spellshadow proficiency), a body can examine the emanations and not only learn what spell it was, but who cast it, the level of the caster, and even some idea of the circumstances in which it was cast. This additional information assumes that the basher looking at the spellshadow knows the spell (that is, has learned it and/or put it in his spell book if he's a wizard) and can cast it (if not restricted to him due to school or sphere).

Perhaps even more useful, however, is that if the examiner does not know the spell but could normally learn it, he can attempt to learn its workings and add it to his repertoire. This is accomplished by a githyanki-created spell called *probe spellshadow* (see page 60 for more information on this spell). Learning a spell from a spellshadow is a difficult and time-consuming process, but sometimes it may be the only method available to gain the spell.

The existence of spellshadows gives spellcasters with access to the Astral the ability to hunt down, identify, and even learn the spells of their foes or rivals. They can also be used as evidence when attempting to reconstruct a past event, since they carry with them some information regarding the circumstances surrounding their casting.

Tales are sometimes told of a wizard known as Gherthrom Shadowchaser, named because he worked as an investigator into crimes resulting from magic use. This tiefling learned the art of studying spellshadows (as well as the spell required) from his githyanki lover. When a crime involving (or *possibly* involving) spell use occurred on a plane bordering the Astral, those who knew of his services and skills would occasionally call Gherthrom to investigate. Once he investigated a duel to the death on Ysgard where the victor cheated by using a *strength* spell to defeat his enemy. Another time, Gherthrom discovered that an accused murder suspect had not cast the *burning hands* spell that slew her husband, but rather it was a rival of her husband's who had framed her. In every case, Gherthrom used his skills with spellshadows to discover vital information regarding the casting of a spell.

A spellshadow, when found, looks like a small dark shape that floats around. It's called a shadow because a body's hand passes through its darkness without feeling anything. Its appearance often gives a clue as to its originating spell. Wizards that find them often tell of strange sounds or smells that arise from the spellshadow, which also may (or may not) suggest the spell that created it. The best way to identify spellshadows, however, is to use the proper skills or spells.



MAGICAL ADDICTION ✦ AND PSYCHOSIS ✦

A danger exists to spellcasters who spend a great deal of time using magic in the Silver Void. The plane's magical and mental nature makes spellcasting very easy – even pleasurable. This can result in a literal addiction to spellcasting, no matter what plane the victim travels to. Those afflicted by this addiction simply hunger for the feeling of their magic coursing through them, often wasting their spells frivolously and always casting their full allotment of prepared enchantments each day.

After a spellcaster has been casting spells (any amount) on the Astral Plane for more than a week, there is a 1% chance each day while on the Astral Plane that she will succumb to the addiction of spellcasting. If her Wisdom score is over 13, she makes the check every other day during her stay on the Astral; if over 16, only once per week. If her Wisdom score is over 18, the check need never be made.

There's a good chance that at first the caster's companions and even the caster herself will not notice the addiction. Soon, or certainly after she leaves the Astral, the caster and those around her'll notice that she becomes consumed by using magic and is only happy when casting spells (and also yearns to return to the Astral, where magic is pure and undiluted). All other activities fall by the wayside. In threatening situations, she will use her spells immediately, even when they are not completely necessary. In fact, even during calm times, Wisdom checks are required to pass through an entire hour without casting a spell. If she exhausts all of her prepared magic, she'll become despondent (–1 penalty to all actions) until she can replenish them. If the caster has a magical item that provides her with extra spells to cast, the use of the item can take the place of a spell. Spell addiction can be cured only by a *restoration* spell or a similar insanity-curing enchantment.

Magical psychosis poses an even greater danger to spell-users on the Astral Plane. The combination of magic and strong mental energies sometimes becomes too much for a wizard or priest (although this affliction is twice as likely to affect wizards). There is a 1% chance per visit to the Astral Plane (not including trips through conduits) that a wizard will be adversely affected by the conditions there and will be driven him barmy (priests have a 1% chance every other visit). The afflicted sod is allowed a saving throw versus spells to shake off the effects. If the character fails the saving throw, he becomes homicidal, paranoid, and schizophrenic. Like spell addiction, magical psychosis must be cured through magical means.

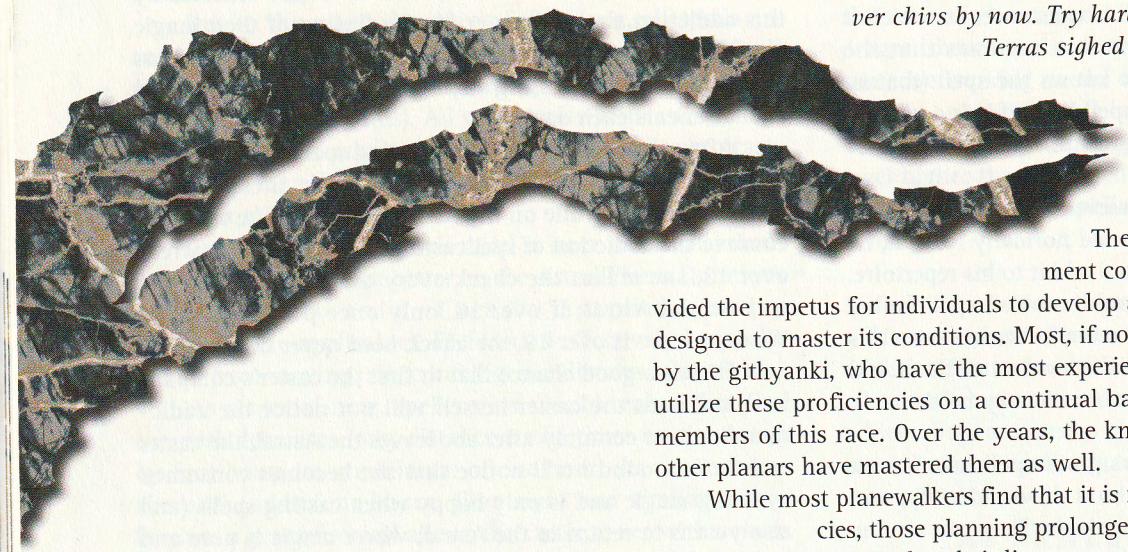
"No, no, no." Malruibos scowled. "Like this." The old man reached out with his mind, grabbing hold of the young girl's mental aura as she raced through the energy flows of the Astral Plane. She began to slow.

Even as Terras focused all of her mind on moving – only moving (as Master Malruibos had taught her) – she could not overcome the force of his mind dragging her to a stop. Her pained expression said that her frustration was getting the better of her. She stopped completely, remaining perfectly still.

"The githyanki would've chopped you into tiny bits with their silver chivs by now. Try harder."

Terras sighed as she felt the mental grip on her subside. Closing her eyes, she started moving again. This time, she thought, I'll show the old man.

Mind Over Matter: Proficiencies



The Astral Plane, being an environment completely unlike any other, has provided the impetus for individuals to develop a number of proficiencies uniquely designed to master its conditions. Most, if not all of these skills, were developed by the githyanki, who have the most experience in the Silver Void by far. They utilize these proficiencies on a continual basis, and they are common among members of this race. Over the years, the knowledge has slipped out, and now other planars have mastered them as well.

While most planewalkers find that it is not worth learning these proficiencies, those planning prolonged stays on the Astral will soon discover that their lives are much, much easier once they've mastered a few of these tricks of the trade.

EVERYTHING CASTS A SHADOW SOMEWHERE — EVEN MAGIC. THE TRICK IS TO KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.

— GHERTHROM SHADOWCHASER

Astral Combat: In the unique arena that is the Astral, combat takes on a new perspective. Attacks come from any of the three dimensions, weapons carry little mass, and blows are driven by the force of Intelligence rather than Strength. Those able to adapt to these conditions gain a considerable advantage over their foes.

Much like the blindfighting proficiency gives those who've mastered it an edge in the darkness, astral combat lets a body fight on the Astral without disability. Those who use this skill have no penalty for firing missile weapons. Foes of the character gain no benefit for higher position, but the trained astral combatant can make a successful proficiency check to gain such a position over his opponent just in time to strike with a +1 bonus. (See "Mindwar: Astral Combat.")

Astral Navigation: By using the strange astral energies which permeate the Silver Void, a blood can find his way through the Astral. While anyone can navigate the Astral Plane, a successful proficiency check using this skill allows a traveler to cut the normal travel time in half. A body accomplishes this by observing the flows of energy through the plane, noting familiar "landmarks," and avoiding the mental quagmires. Essentially, learning this proficiency entails discovering how to perceive the astral energies and recognize them for what they are – which is something the untrained eye simply cannot do.

Astral Running: The ability to move on the Astral Plane comes naturally to any being with a thinking mind. Though speed depends upon Intelligence, even those of average wits can move fairly quickly. Those who wish to move very fast, as fast perhaps as the githyanki themselves, need training and skill. The ability to move at greater than normal speeds is called astral running, although it has little to do with the physical activity of the same name.

Astral running entails a special method of focusing a body's thoughts, beyond just simply "thinking really hard." Those who are taught the secret can travel at an astral movement rate equal to their Intelligence score multiplied by 6, to a maximum of 96. A cutter can sustain this movement for up to one round per point of Constitution. While using the astral running proficiency, it is not possible to perform any other actions.

Even with the proficiency, a nongithyanki still cannot fully achieve a githyanki's skill in astral movement. While characters with this skill can probably keep up with githyanki (for a while), the near-natives can maintain these speeds while performing other actions.

Astral Tracking: Similar to astral navigation in ways that normal tracking and navigational skills never are, this skill also utilizes the unnamed astral energies of the plane. With astral tracking, the path of a creature can be found and followed through the strange environs of the plane. A body can determine only the race of the maker of the "tracks" using this proficiency, but no other special information.

Project Thoughts: This deceptively named proficiency does not involve mental communication or telepathy in any way. Instead, it is as close to a physical attack as a body gets on the Astral Plane. Simply put, a character with this skill projects her extraneous, random thoughts upon the astral form of another, thus slowing her down as she is caught in the mire of mental drag (see "Racing Through Nothing: Astral Movement").

It works like this: If a body has this proficiency and makes a successful skill check, she can project her thoughts around any figure within sight. If the target has a lower Intelligence score than the projector of the thoughts, the target is slowed down to a stop, held in place (able to act, but not able to move from that point in "space"). If the Intelligence score of the target is equal to the projector, the target's movement rate is halved. In any case, this ability affects only movement, not other activities like combat, spellcasting, etc.

The effect lasts as long as the projector devotes her full concentration. The target can make Intelligence checks each round (starting the round after the initial effect) to attempt to break the hold. The target must remain within the sight of the projector or the hold is automatically broken.

Read Spellshadow: After a body uses the spell *probe spellshadow* to discover and reveal a spellshadow (see "Spellwarp: Astral Magic"), this proficiency is used to examine the shadow and determine the identity of the caster and the circumstances in which it was cast. Only a basher familiar with the spell used and its parameters can use this proficiency.

A successful check reveals the identity of the caster. If a body manages to do that, a second check determines the time and place that the spell was cast. If these facts are discovered, a third check allows the cutter to determine the recipient, if any (if the spell has no recipient or this detail is obvious, this check can be skipped). Lastly, the fourth check determines whether or not a body learns the situation surrounding the casting of the spell. The situation could include details regarding whether the spell was cast in combat, as part of a deception, etc.

Sense Emotion: If someone is displaying strong emotions on the Astral, he sends out strong waves of energy. Bloods that know how can "look" for this emotional energy and follow it back to its source. A successful check using this proficiency indicates that the energy is detected if it is present.

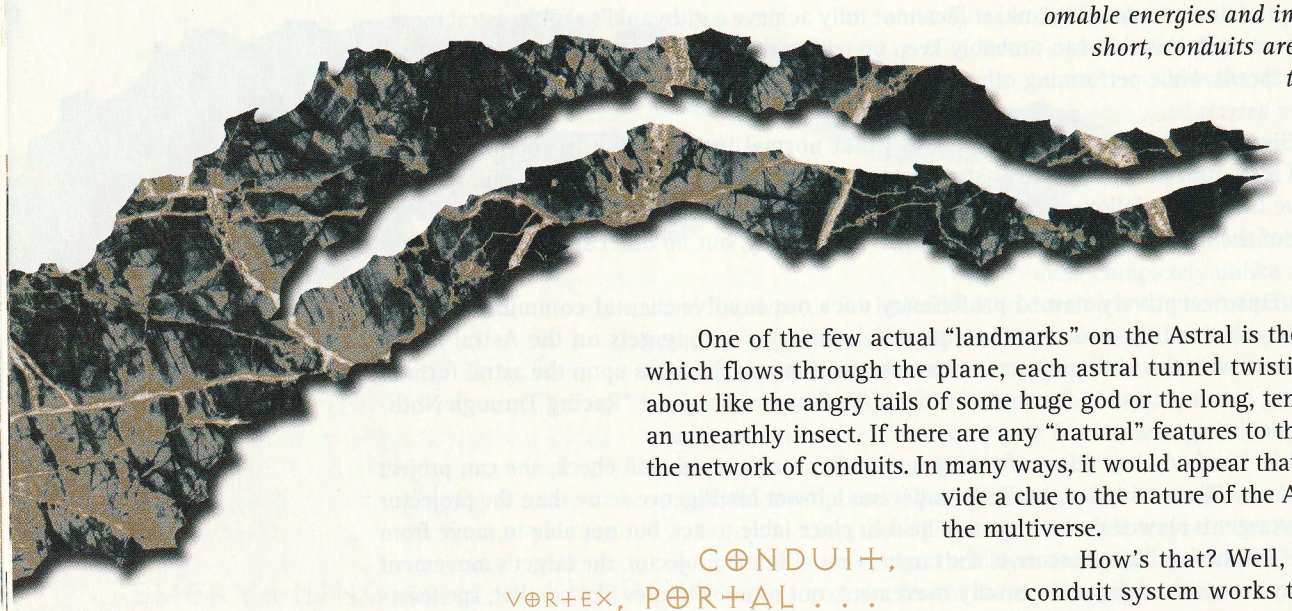
Since distances on the Astral Plane are relative to a body's perceptions, this ability does not have a "range." Instead, the emotional energy can be detected if the source is less than half an hour's travel time (see "Racing Through Time: Astral Movement") away from the blood trying to find it.

Here's what most folks know about the Astral:

A body can jump through a hole on one of the Outer Planes and scoot through a big tube (called a conduit, but most probably don't even know that) that leads to some other plane. The tube goes through the Astral Plane.

The Spiritweb: Conduits

Not only is this an extraordinarily minor facet of the Astral, it's an extraordinarily minor facet of conduits. First off, they can only go from an Outer Plane to the Prime and/or back again. They're an immaterial highway, a metaphysical network of pathways for unfathomable energies and immortal spirits. In short, conduits aren't made for your traveling pleasure, berk – they've got a higher purpose.
– "General" (self-proclaimed) Amiil Facolas



One of the few actual "landmarks" on the Astral is the conduit network which flows through the plane, each astral tunnel twisting and whipping about like the angry tails of some huge god or the long, tendril-like feelers of an unearthly insect. If there are any "natural" features to the Silver Void, it is the network of conduits. In many ways, it would appear that the conduits provide a clue to the nature of the Astral, and perhaps the multiverse.

CONDUIT, VORTEX, PORTAL . . .
WHO CARES?
IT GETS ME THERE.
— SORTH INHANCIL, PLANAR TRADER

How's that? Well, it's like this: The conduit system works too well. It makes too much sense. That is, the astral conduits connect the Prime Material Plane to the Outer Planes. They connect the worshipers to the worshiped and the believers to the belief. This function's served literally. When a prime dies, his spirit travels through conduits to get to his rightful resting place where he serves as a petitioner on the appropriate plane. Conduits also conduct granted spells and abilities to priests from their powers. Some say they're even where prayers go to reach the right god. Without the conduits, would it all still work? Would the planes function as they do now, with powers, petitioners, and mortal worshipers? Nobody knows.

It all works out so well – it all fits together with the cosmology of the planes – a body's got to wonder if it was all *made* this way, for this purpose. And if that's true, who created it? Who conceived of such a cosmic-level plan for things? Is there some grand architect of the Astral – or of all the planes? No one knows, or at least those who do aren't talking (actually, plenty of berks claim to know the answer – just ask any faction member – but nobody can prove anything).

The fact that any berk can blunder into a conduit and find himself on another plane is perhaps only a side-effect of their true nature and purpose.

ADAM
REX

✦ THE CARETAKERS ✦

"You should not, cannot . . . will not harm the conduit. The grand eternal Scheme of Things must persist . . ."
– A caretaker spirit inhabiting the body of a planewalker named Huinn, speaking to his companion, a wizard about to cast *conduit pierce*

The conduit network and the whole spiritual highway system doesn't work perfectly (what does?). Things go wrong. Though some graybeards have spread the chant that the conduits themselves are alive and sentient, it's a pretty indisputable fact that intelligent creatures watch over them and make sure that they function properly. These caretakers make up a special group of astral searchers. Created by violence or strong emotion exhibited on the Astral, these noncorporeal entities attempt to take control of a basher's material form so they can have a life of their own. They are literally creatures composed of the random thoughts that drift through the Astral Plane, woken to a semblance of life by happenstance. However, a few of these strange beings (before they've found a body to inhabit) evolve into intelligent guardians that watch over the conduits and their spiritual "cargo."

If these astral guardians inhabit the body of another, it is because they need a physical form to accomplish some task in relation to their special duty. Their theft of a material body is never a permanent thing.

Astral guardians always appear at the formation of a new conduit, conduit movement, or any other major conduit event. There's only a 2% chance that one or more will be around a conduit any other time. An outside source interfering with a conduit (such as through the *conduit pierce* spell described in the chapter called "The Githyanki") has a 10% chance of drawing the unwanted attention of a conduit caretaker. In such an encounter, the guardian is likely to observe the activities of the offender before rushing in to stop him. Sometimes, however, a rash spirit will do what it can to prevent any tampering with a conduit.

Because of the presence of these caretakers, some give the chant that these spirits are guardians or guides for the dead spirits that travel through the conduits from the Prime to their appropriate Outer Plane. More than likely, this isn't true. While plenty of primes developed legends about spectral entities which usher the dead to their final rest (one of the more colorful descriptions includes a skeletal face, a hooded robe, and a scythe), these astral guardians watch over the conduits, not their contents. Fact is, the caretakers don't seem to give one whit about the folks (dead or otherwise) that travel through the conduits.

✦ TRAVELING THROUGH CONDUITS ✦

For the most part, the dead spirits that are on their way to become petitioners don't need any advice on what it's like to travel through a conduit. The spirit is just drawn to the nearest conduit (and conduits always seem to ground themselves near, but not directly in, a populated area) and goes on his way, with no fuss. It's not quite so easy for the living to use them as transport, but plenty of well-lanned folks still do.

FINDING THEM

The hardest part about using a conduit is finding one. While a portal has to be within a bounded space, like a doorway, a conduit has no such limitations. The ends of a conduit are invisible holes in space. A spell like *true seeing* must be used to detect them, in which case the opening looks like a reflective, opaque cloud. There is never a way to determine where the conduit leads by its appearance. Only experience or divination magic will reveal such facts.

Plenty of planar sources claim to have information on conduits and their locations. *The Book of Grey Lesh* is said to be a good source, but it's already somewhat out of date. The modrons supposedly know of all of the conduits which lead to and from Mechanus. Likewise, it's probable that the baatezu are familiar with most conduits that lead into and out of their own plane. Some primes have done a fairly good job of cataloging the conduits connected with their own prime-material world. 'Course, the Guvners do a good job of keeping up with the shifting positions of conduits, but even their sources are incomplete. A few among their number have made it their life's work to find the order in the spiritweb. They still haven't tumbled to the real dark yet, though. Conduit movement and creation still elude all attempts to predict them. It is a fact that no single (known) source knows of all the conduits in existence. Bodies discover new conduits every day.

Conduits can exist anywhere and are usually so hard to come upon that they can't be found accidentally. *Usually* is, of course, the key word. A prime author named Thiris Nam Hiarth once wrote a tale called *The Stranded Fiend*, in which he states the following:

Wings of fury, claws of blood, the horrid creature stood amid the carnage and wept. Though firstly, I thought him to be one with remorse for the horrors that he had committed upon the fair folk of the village, I then was to hear his plaintive cry: "Where is my home, my land, my kindred? How have I been torn from these and brought to this realm of unbefouled air and weak flesh?" I knew then this to be no ordinary monster.

This story and other tales like it indicate that people have accidently blundered into a conduit, only to be hipped on the other end. These stranded sods probably

didn't even realize they'd come through a conduit and so didn't even think to discover if they could simply ride it back to where they started.

The other difficulty involved in finding conduits is that they move. Although this movement is usually exhibited in the newer specimens, all conduits move, sometimes only slightly over centuries of time.

USING THEM

Once a body's found a conduit (usually after someone else reveals its location), entering it is pretty easy. No key is needed, for there's no known way to lock or bar a conduit, unless a body happens to be a power. (The drow goddess Lolth once created a set of actions which were required to access a conduit from the prime world of Oerth to her layer of the Abyss, essentially making it no different – in effect – from a portal. Her followers had erected a temple dedicated to her around the underground conduit end, and her avatar was known to spend a good deal of time there, which suggests that the limited-access conduit was a special situation and probably no easy task to maintain.)

A body who's entered a conduit doesn't have to do anything to travel through it. There's just a bit of a disorienting pull, and the trip's over. Though he's shooting through a (virtually infinite) astral tunnel, he arrives at the other end in less than a second. No one ever perceives that they've gone through a conduit, because it happens so fast. All the traveler realizes is that he's moved. Some claim they experience a feeling of dizziness, queasiness, or disorientation that doesn't necessarily come with the use of a standard portal or gate.

On the Outer Planes, conduits only connect to the topmost layer of the plane. This connection is so limited because the upper layers are the only layers which border the Astral. This, however, seems to be enough to get the spirits of the soon-to-be-petitioners where they're going.

Movement through a conduit causes it to thrash and whip about on the Astral itself. Anyone within 50 yards of a conduit at such a time might be struck by the whipping tunnel (assume a THAC0 of 15) for 6d6 points of damage. Needless to say, most canny bloods don't go near them. Those that have touched a conduit from the outside say that it feels like both a tingling energy construct and some very smooth, membranous tube. Only specially created items or spells can affect this substance, whatever it is – and those traveling *through* a conduit cannot affect, harm, or alter it in any way. Since most conduits have a diameter of about 10 feet, a body should think twice before trying to hold on to one – especially if it's thrashing about.

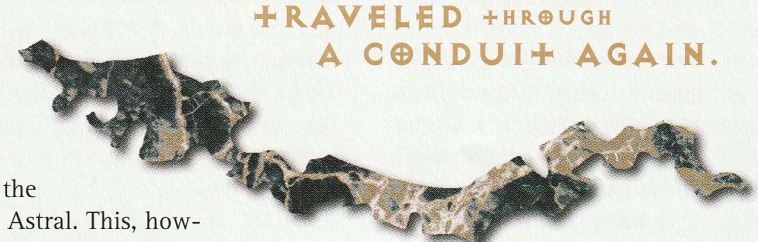
✦ TYPES OF CONDUITS ✦

Conduit types are distinguished by their age. A conduit's "life span" is about 1,000 years. Conduits are born, and they die – both events have been witnessed by planewalkers. A blood named Ythron was among the first to observe that much of the debris that floats on the Astral originates from the birth of a conduit. He reported the following:

"... The plane around me continued to roil as I had never experienced. Suddenly, a vortex of swirling ... astral space (for lack of a better term) opened up and spewed forth matter like an infant tired of his food. Trees, rocks, dirt, and air burst forth and onto the Astral, and the vortex – as well as the swirling plane around me – coalesced into what I knew to be the strand of a conduit winding its way through the void. All was still, other than the occasional movement of the conduit, that veinlike pulsing and throbbing that all astral travelers are acquainted with. . . ."

I HAVE THIS HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE. IN IT, I'M TRAVELING THROUGH A CONDUIT BUT THERE'S THIS GIANT MOSQUITO PERCHED ON THE OUTSIDE OF IT ON THE ASTRAL PLANE. IT'S GOT ITS PROBOSCIS STUCK INTO THE CONDUIT, AND AS I PASS BY IT SUCKS THE LIFE OUT OF ME. WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS MEANS?

— PILIS NYE, WHO NEVER TRAVELED THROUGH A CONDUIT AGAIN.



It's become clear that when a conduit opens itself in another plane, it initially pulls in a good deal of matter from the surrounding area. Sometimes even living creatures are sucked onto the Astral in this way. This phenomena is responsible for most of the astral islands, and many other astral locations.

The death of a conduit is usually less dramatic. When this time comes, it slowly dwindles and fades. Dying conduits are said to "flutter": They exist one moment, not the next, and then return. This in-and-out state can continue for days. For a planar traveler, this can be a risky time to use a conduit. No one knows the dark of what happens if something's within a conduit when it dies. Conduit deaths, as well as births, are fairly common events when one figures on the virtually limitless number of them crisscrossing through the Astral Plane.

The whole matter of the birth, aging, and death of conduits often sparks the idea in some basher's brain-box that conduits are alive. Well, that's never been proven. It might be true, but if it is, it's life like no one has ever known before. It would be life without flesh, but rather a body composed of some sort of ectoplasmic energy and various unidentifiable substances.

Actually, seeing as how efficiently the conduit system works, it'd make more sense to suspect that the whole conduit network is actually a single living creature with differing parts. If this is true, the creature (or perhaps creatures) is some vast entity, existing only to serve the multiverse – unless there's more going on than anyone sees. A body might suggest that such a creature would exist within the "big picture" – perhaps too big for a prime or planar to even see.

Another chant a body might hear in regard to conduits is that somewhere near the "center" of the Astral all conduits meet at some huge confluence. (Though less frequently bandied about than the "living conduit" idea, the two are not mutually exclusive – in fact, if one could be proven, the other might very well be too.) Though this is possible, of course, most graybeards think that if such a nexus of conduits existed, some planewalker would've found it by now.

YOUNG

After a conduit has been born, it stays in the "young" stage for about 200–300 years. Young conduits are one-way, either leading to or from the Prime (but never both). These new conduits have a tendency to move about, changing their origin and destination occasionally or even frequently. These changes usually take place slowly and subtly, and certainly do not affect a body in transit. However, should someone use a young conduit, it is foolish to assume that it will be in the same place years later.

MATURE

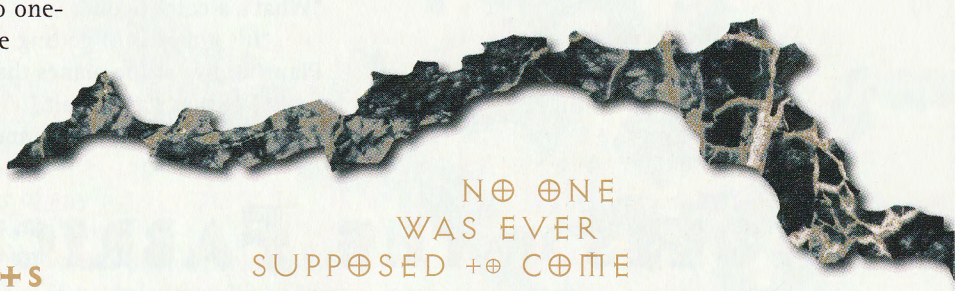
Only when a conduit matures does it become a two-way passage. These are the most common, for these conduits remain in this stage for 500–600 years. Mature specimens are more stable than others, maintaining their relative position for most of the time spent in this stage.

OLD

After a conduit has been in existence for 600–900 years, it begins to act in a manner which could only be called erratic. It begins to move about like a young conduit, but with sudden, unpredictable jumps. A conduit leading from a prime world to Tir na Og on the Outlands might suddenly take some hapless sods to Gehenna instead. Or it might move its prime connection to deep underwater or high in the air, where it is far harder to

use. Worse, it might shift from being two-way to one-way and back again, seemingly at random. Some planewalkers call these conduits "ornery."

Conduits remain in this old stage typically for 100–400 years, although conduits which've lasted much longer than this supposedly exist.



NO ONE WAS EVER SUPPOSED TO COME TO THE ASTRAL, BUT EVERYONE DOES. AIN'T IT GRAND?

— FACTOL KARAN OF THE XAOSITECTS

OTHERPLANAR CONDUITS

There are conduits which do not lead through the Astral Plane at all, at least as far as we understand planar geography now. These planar conduits connect Outer Planes to other Outer Planes and can connect to any layer. Since these do not seem to extend through the Astral, there's little need to discuss them here. It is interesting to note that there's a theory bandied about which claims that these connections are actually old astral conduits gone seriously awry.

SILVER CORDS

Silver cords are tiny, artificial conduits that link an astral traveler and his physical body. The magic which creates and sustains them was developed by a spellcaster long ago who studied the form and function of conduits. The similarity between conduits and silver cords lends credence to the chant that githyanki silver swords can cut conduits as easily as they cut silver cords.

✦ CONDUIT ODDITIES ✦

Either as a result of old conduits acting up, or as proof that there is a nexus of all conduits somewhere, a few strange things occur every once in a great while when traveling through them. Basically, they don't always go where they are supposed to. A body'll hear tales that occasionally a group traveling through a conduit'll get separated, with one or more of the group ending up at a different destination from the rest. Sometimes they're able to enter the conduit again and get back, sometimes not.

One theory is that old conduits (perhaps it has nothing to do with age) sprout new offshoots or split, going to two different destinations. Others say that some or all conduits intersect at one place or another, and sometimes sods using them get re-routed. Even spirits of the dead are said to occasionally wind up on the wrong destination plane.

✦ CONDUIT DANGERS ✦

Aside from the dangers of old, unreliable conduits, or those which might unexpectedly branch off – taking a body (and not necessarily her companions) to a locale she doesn't want to go – there are a few other dangers to conduits and those who choose to travel within them.

The githyanki have developed a spell called *conduit pierce* (see page 62) which enables them to attack those traveling within. Other races have discovered this nasty enchantment as well, and so now a body's enemies have a way to strike at him even within a conduit. No place is safe anymore.

'Course, the spell was actually inspired by the creature the githyanki name h'rak'va, which means something like "astral vampire." These horrid monsters latch onto a conduit and dig their proboscis into it. There, they wait in strange nests for creatures to come through the conduit and then devour their life essence.

Rumored reports of yet another strange creature (some say it's fiendish, others call it spiritlike) interested in conduits linger as well. This thing has huge cleavers on the end of its multitudinous limbs and seems interested only in using them to slash conduits in two. This mysterious beast, creatively called the conduit cleaver, is said to be a singular creature – while others claim to have seen them in great number. The only thing consistent among the different stories is the creature's incredible, vicious glee in cleaving conduits. If there is such a beast, such a slash would sever the conduit's linked locations, so that if someone were to enter either end (or just the one end of a young conduit), the traveler would end up on the Astral at the point of the cut. Severed conduit ends wither and die in a few months.

A similar occurrence happens in a *burst.* A burst is an event which happens primarily to mature conduits. No one is sure why, but sometimes the conduit ruptures somewhere along its path, severing the connection. Some folks suggest that a burst occurs when corporeal travelers (rather than spirits) over-use a conduit.

Despite all these (and most assuredly more) dangers, conduits are still extraordinarily safe. The vast, vast majority of conduit trips go by uneventfully, taking the traveler "a wink and a nod" to get to her far-off destination.

Holes in the Fabric: Color Pools

"What's a color pool?"

"It's a means of getting from the Astral Plane to any of the planes that it borders."

"No, that's a conduit."

"No, a conduit is a connection *through* the Astral from the Prime Material to an Outer Plane. A color pool is more like a doorway."

"You mean it's a portal."

"No, not really. Portals exist in a bounded space – like an arch. They mostly lead to and from Sigil, although there's a bunch of them throughout the planes."

"So what're you saying?"

"A color pool is more natural – like just a way to slip from the Astral to somewhere else. No key, no arch . . ."

"Isn't that a path, like Oceanus or Mount Olympus?"

"No, not like that. It's . . . um. Oh, just shut up."

– Cecil and Toin, performing nightly at the Singing Vortex, in Sigil's Market Ward

A feature unique to the Astral Plane is the existence of color pools. A planewalker once referred to the pools as "coalescing basins of spacetime around pinprick holes in reality that allow a tiny bit of the true world into the Silver Void." The description's not far off. Holes riddle the Astral Plane, taking the form of color pools which lead to the planes that it borders – the Prime Material and Outer Planes. These holes assume the form of two-dimensional, shimmering pools of color, visible only from one side. They seem to be composed of some mixture of astral energies and stuff which can only be described as "liquid reality." This is literally a diluted form of physical space and time intruding into the mental realm of the Astral. This combination allows passage between the Astral and the more physical (or terrestrial) planes.

WHOOPS.

– SOME BERK THINKING THAT HE'D FIGURED OUT THE FABLED "COLOR CODE" OF THE COLOR POOLS

Perhaps not coincidentally, color pools resemble the gateways found on Mount Olympus and the World Ash, Yggdrasil, which can take a body from one plane to another in a heartbeat. These gateways along the great paths are really just extensions of the paths' transplanar power, resembling color pools without actually *being* color pools as astral scholars understand them. Astral color pools are a uniquely astral phenomenon, utilizing both the strange energies and the absence of space and time to function. While the color pools of the Astral can take a body from the Astral to another plane, canny folks have managed to figure out there's more to them than even that.

TRAVELING THROUGH ✦ COLOR POOLS ✦

Color pools are doorways to the uppermost layer of any plane that borders the Astral. All of the Outer Planes have color pools leading to them, and all prime-material worlds possess links to the Astral in such a manner as well. While the number of pools is virtually limitless, some places seem to have more of these holes leading to them than others.

FINDING THEM

There's a saying that goes, "There's no such thing as a free ride anywhere in the multiverse." If this is true, the color pools still come pretty close. Unlike conduits or portals, they're easily found. When a basher's on the Astral, she only has to think of going to a color pool that leads to a particular destination, and she's on her way. If she's been there before, it takes her even less time to get there (see the chapter "Racing Through Nothing: Astral Movement").

SO, SINCE THIS IS A REALM OF THE MIND, IF I THINK THAT I DON'T FEEL PAIN, I WON'T FEEL IT, RIGHT?

— NEWCOMER TO THE ASTRAL

Though a traveler can move toward a color pool leading to a desired plane, the same traveler cannot specify a color pool that will take her to a particular place on that plane. This means that a cutter can think of going to the color pool that leads to the Outlands, but not to the gate-town of Sylvania. This isn't to say that only one pool leads to the Outlands; there are many. Unless a body knows of a specific pool, however, she'll go to a random one. Guessing that a pool leads to Sylvania won't cut it, even if one exists. (This also means that a body can't specify what world she wants to go to on the Prime, so unless she's got directions to or knowledge of a pool which'll take her to the right world, she's out of luck.)

'Course, color pools are invisible on one side, and completely two-dimensional, so they can be difficult to find, even once a body's arrived. Don't be fooled, however, because both sides of the pool will take a traveler to the pool's destination. Blundering into the invisible side of the wrong color pool has put more than one berk in the deadbook.

A body shouldn't believe the screed that color pools are color-coded to show which plane they lead to. Nothing in the planes is *that* easy.

USING THEM

Moving into a color pool is like stepping through a sheet of warm molasses. As the traveler moves forward, the astral energies of the pool move to envelop him. From the point of view of someone on the Astral, the character has been swallowed up by the opaque near-liquid of the pool. From the point of view of someone on the destination plane, the traveler appears out of nowhere.

Just as when a cutter steps through one of the portals in the City of Doors, the transfer from the Astral to the next plane takes virtually no time. Unlike portals, which are conveniently located within bounded spaces, the planeward side of a color pool can be deep underwater, far in the air, or even underground. Not all of them are handy to use, for unlike portals they do not seem to have been placed by an intelligent or purposeful force.

A character astrally projecting – that is, using the *astral spell* – has a physical body created for him as he steps through a color pool, so that he can interact on the new plane (but this is not his real body – if he's slain, he just goes back to his original physical form). Such a character cannot enter a color pool which will take him back to his home plane. Characters physically traveling through the Astral "translate" back into a physical form when they leave through a color pool.

TYPES OF COLOR POOLS

Take a walk,
Take a swim,
But stay thee from a color pool.
Watch me run,
Watch me fly,
But stay thee from a color pool.

– Sigil children's chant (its age is unknown, but it is ancient, and its meaning has long been forgotten)

Like conduits, more than one variety of color pool exists. Color pools, however, as near as can be determined, do not age. This has to do with the fact that while conduits are a sort of creation or extension of the Astral Plane (or even an intelligent, and at the very least purposeful, force), color pools more than likely result from damage dealt to the Astral. The current chant is that traffic onto and out of the Astral – a plane most contend was never supposed to be visited in the first place – created these holes on the Astral. No one knows for sure of the exact means of this creation, its rate, or whether there are even worse effects yet.

A body could certainly contend that color pools make getting around the multiverse much easier, and the more that there are the better. Some graybeards assert, however, that the amount and intensity of the thoughts that seep onto the Astral from elsewhere are increasing. If this is the fault of color pools, then they are also responsible for the ever-worsening psychic wind storms (created by the thoughts of those on the planes that touch the Astral).

ONE-WAY

The vast majority of color pools are leading one-way from the Astral to another plane (never the other way around). They spit a traveler out onto their corresponding plane ignominiously, with no way back. Color pools can lead to virtually anywhere on a plane – into a city center, or out in the middle of nowhere.

TWO-WAY

There is no way to determine whether a color pool is one of the very, very rare two-way varieties except through trial and error. The side of the pool that does not open onto the Astral Plane is always invisible.

A few of these rare color pools have been discovered and cataloged, becoming common trading routes onto and off of the Astral. In fact, a few trading towns have been built around these cross over points. Others have been greedily surrounded by fortresses and kept secret.

WRONG.
"SLAP"
— A MORE EXPERIENCED PLANEWALKER

Some of these color pools are responsible for the presence of nonastral creatures on the plane. There are many stories of wandering beasts, from the Prime or one of the Outer Planes, found on the Astral – everything from owlbears to dragons to imps to chaos beasts.

✦ SCRYING ✦

"We here at the *Speck in the Void* feel that the best way to watch anything is through a color pool on the Astral. Yes, it's completely safe. These are one-way pools. Can I make a reservation for you?"
– Thir U-nasha, the tiefling proprietor of an isolated Astral tavern fortunate enough to be built around three different color pools

There's a trick involving color pools which even some well-lanned bloods aren't aware of. A body can concentrate on a color pool and see what lies at its destination point. Canny planewalkers use this ability so that they can look before they leap. Planewalkers being planewalkers, however, a few have learned to squeeze this trick further for an even greater benefit.

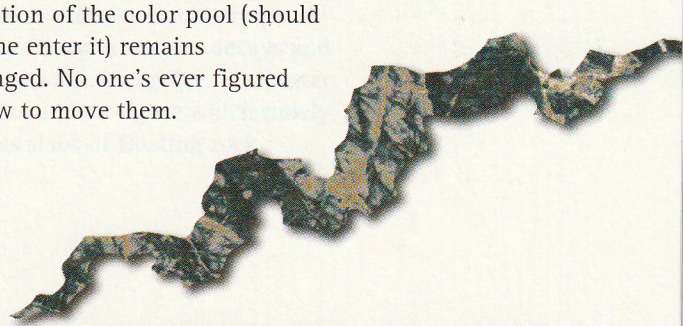
It seems that if a body concentrates even harder, he can "move" the point of view given to him through the pool, allowing him to look around a bit. This view can move at the concentrating character's own astral movement rate and can rise, fall, and pivot to allow full viewing. It cannot move through walls or other solid barriers. Viewing inside small spaces, like the interior of a building or subterranean cave, is usually very difficult, even if the point of view is somehow worked in through an open door or some such. This method of spying allows the scryer only visual information. Spells cannot be cast through the color pool.

From the point of view of those on the plane, this scrying pool, or "astral window" as some call it, is completely invisible. It can be detected by spells or similar magic, and powerful godlike creatures can snap the astral window back to its original view with but a thought. Creatures with gaze attacks, like basilisks and their ilk, can inadvertantly use these attacks upon the scrying agent.

Concentrating on a scrying pool tires a body, and a blood can only keep it up for ten rounds per point of Constitution. After this, he must rest. At such a time, the position of the astral window remains constant for 1d10 hours, reverting to the destination point of the pool after that. Twenty hours must pass before the pool can be used to scry again.

Since these limitations can really hamper moving the window extremely far, it may be beneficial to find the color pool that opens closest to the area to be viewed, although the search for the best pool may be a lengthy one. If a body's lucky, she might even find two color pools that have their destinations near each other, allowing multiple views of the same location.

No matter where a basher moves an astral window, the destination of the color pool (should someone enter it) remains unchanged. No one's ever figured out how to move them.



"There are islands in the Astral Ocean, once great rulers of the multiverse, now brought low."
– Feldmaster Rivan Grierr

Forgotten Husks: Dead Gods

While matter on the Astral is sparse, occasionally a traveler will come across a mass of rock that was pulled in from another plane when a conduit initially formed. Much less often, however (yet it still occurs), the traveler can look closely at one of these rocky masses and note a peculiar, almost familiar shape or essence about it. Such a floating rock may actually be a power.

A power?

A god?

A deity?

How can a floating rock be a power? Well, sometimes, a god's brought low. Some think that the power's dead, but that ain't really so. The dead-book has no room for a deity. Instead, a "dead" power's sent to the Astral (where no one was supposed to go, remember?), sentenced to float dormant and powerless. A power is a being of thought – of concepts, ideas, and most importantly, belief. It's said time and again that on the planes, belief is power. No greater proof of this chant can be found than the dead gods themselves. Devoid of belief (or nearly so), they are returned to the mental realm of the Astral, where everything is only thought. There they drift like a nearly forgotten memory, empty husks of the awesome force they once embodied.

✦ How a God Can Die ✦

There are essentially two means of demise for a power, though the first is so unlikely as to be barely worth mentioning. The second occurs far more commonly but is also more sobering and sad. Nevertheless, it contains a great truth about the nature of all things.

MAN, THE POWERS ARE JUST DYING TO GET IN HERE.

— RED TAVRALANI, FAILED COMIC WHO PERFORMED AT THE SPECK IN THE VOID

By the Sword

It is possible, but just barely so, that a power can be slain by violence. The might required to do so rests only in the hands of the powers themselves, and even still, killing one of their own is a nearly impossible (not to mention unthinkable) task. Most would never consider it because of the danger involved. Gods fight, doing battle and waging wars about which great songs are sung and poems are written, but rarely do they actually slay one another.

Such a task entails more than just simply piercing a power's heart with a blade – these aren't fragile mortals, berk. Divine might is required to quench divine life. A power's got to be willing to expend (temporarily) much of his energy to end his fellow's life. Moreover, he's got to risk immortal combat, where he's in as much danger as his foe (in the whole scope of things, any and every power's a terrifying opponent).

A power who has slain another remains weak for many years. He's also risked the wrath of his victim's kin and comrades; many of these are also powers. Thus, most powers do not willingly attempt to slay one another. Plenty of other ways that gods can harm each other exist (through their followers, their sphere of influence, their realm, etc.). Only the most terrible transgressors among the gods are slain by their peers. Moreover, this is usually done by a number of other powers who've deliberated and finally banded together to end their fellow's existence.

'Course, some say that even a mortal can send a power to the dead-book if he knows the dark of it. Such talk is just screed, surely. No mortal blade's ever been forged and no spell's ever been spoken that can inflict harm upon a god.

BY LOSS OF FAITH

Far more commonly (though it's still very rare), a power will die a slow, undramatic death. Her demise will be brought about as her worshipers' faith wanes and mortals cease to believe in her or what she represents. Some folks say that a power is merely the sum of the beliefs of her worshipers. The mortal followers of the god sustain her and give her life. This certainly appears to be true, because no worship means no deity – there're some floating gods on the Astral as proof.

Long ago, a power by the name of Phissanol had followings on two major prime-material worlds and a realm on Arcadia. She was a goddess of the full moon, and the light and safety that it brings in the void of night. One of the prime worlds was destroyed in a terrible celestial holocaust brought on by the wrath of other powers in Phissanol's pantheon. Phissanol's luck worsened from there, as her worshipers on the remaining world began to forget her. Try as she might to make her presence known, her worship declined and her followers turned to other powers or other concerns. Through magic or ordinary fire, they could bring their own light into the night, they claimed. Slowly, Phissanol's power began to wane. As this happened, her remaining priests lost their granted abilities and spells. They, too, began to leave her service. Over the centuries, these effects continued to worsen as a snowball grows rolling down a snowy hill. Her might and influence decreased as her followers abandoned her, and more and more stopped worshiping her as her powers lessened. Slowly, pitifully, Phissanol faded away. Her realm receded and decayed, eventually becoming a vast wasteland. Phissanol fell into a deep sleep and faded away entirely. The Astral gained another floating island.

Obviously, this is no small matter. A power tries to keep her followers at any cost. Nonetheless, belief isn't something that a body (even a power) can force on someone. It doesn't happen often, but sometimes circumstances will eliminate the deity's followers or their faith. This sort of "death" takes centuries, however, as most powers have literally millions or billions of followers on multiple worlds and planes.

✦ WHEN A POWER PASSES ON ✦

The revelation that a power can die shocks many. Most priests find it difficult to believe that the objects of their lives and devotions can be transformed into slag heaps drifting through nothingness.

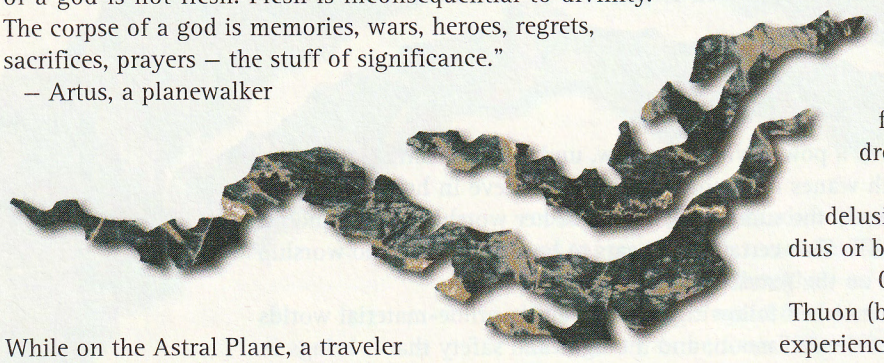
Obviously, a power who's fallen to the Astral no longer grants spells or abilities to his priests, although in most cases, when a power dies, there are no priests left anyway. The god's realm decays and becomes nothing more than wasted land, and any proxies or similar servants left die or flee. The power itself becomes comatose and fades away to the Astral, taking on the form of a giant figure which slowly changes into crude stone. Most can easily be mistaken for huge, shapeless slabs of floating rock.

Yet, power and energy still resides within the dead gods. It lies dormant within them, appearing only as dreams that play across their forms, and then it fades after time. Can this energy be tapped? Exploited? Some bashers think so, and have tried. Some try still.

Since dead gods don't really die, some folks think this means that the gods can come back – that they can be revived. While this has never been known to happen, only a fool would say that it's impossible.

EXPLORING ✦ THE DEAD GODS ✦

"You must remember, my boy, fleshly bodies for gods are nothing more than a matter of convenience . . . The corpse of a god is not flesh. Flesh is inconsequential to divinity. The corpse of a god is memories, wars, heroes, regrets, sacrifices, prayers – the stuff of significance."
– Artus, a planewalker



While on the Astral Plane, a traveler can find and explore these immense rocky isles. They drift for all eternity within the Silver Void, unmoving and unmoved. Some are hundreds of feet long, while others stretch out for miles.

DETERMINING THE IDENTITY (AND THE DANGERS THEREOF)

The form of the isle doesn't always reflect the physical appearance that the power took in its life – usually, they are not easily discernable as corpses at all. An average berk can't tumble to anything about the deity's former identity, appearance, or power just through cursory examination. Other means exist, however.

The body of the god, that portion that makes its final resting place on the Astral, isn't the physical body of the god at all – because they don't have them. Instead, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and energy compose a power. That's why when it dies, it seeps its way onto the Astral Plane – home to lost memories and ideas. These thoughts and feelings cocoon themselves into things which most call dead gods. While this is the only example of "solidified thoughts" on the Astral, a body shouldn't assume that the thoughts of powers are constructed in the same manner as mortals'. Mortal thoughts become psychic winds, and godly thoughts become rocky islands. That's the way of things.

Sometimes, however, the powers' thoughts "leak" out in the form of images or strong emotions. While on the corpse of a deity, a cutter can find herself suddenly experiencing vivid memories not her own. Sometimes those sods near a dead god will be overcome with an irresistible urge or emotion. These are not purposeful manipulations of the dead power, but side effects of the powerful mental energies of the area. Some planewalkers claim that a few of the gods' memories and residual thoughts are so strong that they become a reality on the rocky corpse, forming cities, landscapes, and even creatures.

While some dead gods have active memory auras, all of them have occasional stirrings. Fortunately, these events are few and far between (a dead power stirs only once or twice in a 500-year period, usually). During these times, the entire corpse shudders and shakes, toppling any buildings or constructions built upon them (githyanki hr'a'cknir predict these "godquakes," enabling them to warn their fellows and move to safety). This continues for 10 to 30 minutes with "aftershocks" continuing for 1 to 4 days afterward. Worse, manifested dreams of power accompany the stirrings. The dreams can either take the form of rampant delusions gleaned from those within a certain radius or become actual physical creations.

Once, a dead god whose name is recorded as Thuon (but of which no other information is known) experienced one of these stirrings. Apparently, Thuon was some sort of monstrous god, revered by creatures that no one even has a name for anymore. Presumably, the demise of these creatures caused the deity's death. In any event, Thuon's monstrous nature was revealed when suddenly horrors never seen before (or more accurately not for a long, long time) began springing forth from his corpse. That area of the Astral quickly became a battleground, with the local githyanki fighting against this new, mysterious force.

After many long, bloody battles, a githyanki explorer named T'gis came upon Thuon's corpse and saw that the creatures were only manifestations of the dead god's dreams. He returned to his people and related this news. The githyanki, acquainted with this situation, stopped fighting the horrors and simply left the area. They knew that the power's dreams would stop shortly, and the horrors would go away. Sure enough, not long afterward, the githyanki returned to find that the creatures had vanished. The githyanki now watch Thuon's corpse closely, wary of another stirring.

In any event, some of Thuon's nature was revealed in the stirring. The easiest way to determine the identity of a dead god is to observe such events – in other words, allow the god to inadvertently reveal his own nature. Otherwise, the only way is to take what observations can be made of the corpse and conduct research. A well-stocked library is essential for such an endeavor, and a good deal of magic such as *legend lore* is very helpful as well.

OTHER DANGERS

More dangers await explorers of dead gods. A few god-isles exert a gravitylike pull, holding matter to them within a radius of a few hundred feet. Not only do these alter the rules that govern the Astral (making the area more like a terrestrial plane), but they become navigational hazards. A traveler entering a gravitylike zone may "fall" into one of these corpses and go straight to the dead-book.

Worse yet, a radius of time surrounds an even more select few, making time pass as it would off the Astral within the area of effect. Just as if they left the plane, objects and people instantly experience time "catching up" with them if they've been on the Astral for a while. Again, blundering into one of these areas can be very dangerous if a body's not prepared. The githyanki avoid such areas as though they were cursed.

THE BENEFITS

The reasons for braving such dangers are many. Despite the fact that the gods are "dead," energies emanate from their corpses, strange even by astral standards. The githyanki attempt to use these energies when possible, but they are careful not to abuse them so as to raise the ire of the Guardian of the Dead Gods (see below). The githyanki hr'a'cknir operate two (and possibly more) essence mines which collect these energies for purposes no nongithyanki has been able to determine or even guess at. Chant is, bloods can employ some of these energies to create certain magical items, golems, and other artificial animate constructs. Other rumors claim that these essences can be distilled into curatives, powerful stimulants, protective charms, and more.

On the surface of the dead powers, a body can find unique plants and valuable minerals. Those looking in the right places will find anything from odd fungi to forests of trees growing on a divine corpse – growing despite the lack of the passage of actual time. Oftentimes the growth (if any) will betray some clue as to the nature or identity of the power. Many more times, it won't. Curative herbs, magical ingredients, and components abound amid this growth. The body itself will often contain gemstones, metals, and even magical ores (adamant, mithral, and more). Mining the body of a dead god can draw unwanted attention, however (see below).

Some deity's corpses secrete a substance called godsblood, which supposedly acts as a great curative and antidote. A blood'll carefully examine the substance to distinguish it from other foul, decay-ridden secretions that congeal and form tainted pools, rivers, and lakes on the corpse. These waters are foul and poisonous. Only an expert can identify godsblood.

THE FALLEN WE HAVE KNOWN

It is not surprising that the Athar have compiled the most complete listing of dead gods. They are gleefully interested in the demise of powers, which shows that gods are not as infallible, immortal, and omnipotent as they claim to be.

The Athar's list includes powers such as Amaunator, Anduiras, Aoskar, Bane, Basaia, Bhaal, Brenna, Dark God, Enki, Ibrandul, Kiputytto, Leira, Masela, Moander, Myrkul, Phissanol, Reynir, Vorynn, and many more. Names of other fallen gods' are recorded, but no one alive today recalls anything about them. These include Etmon, Jirubar, Llassos, Thuon, Togiir, and Zem. Nonetheless, there are countless more dead powers than the Athar or anyone else has catalogued. These beings have no recorded names, histories, or existence.

LIVING GODS OF THE ASTRAL

The Silver Void is almost completely free of divine presence. The powers, being among the most ancient of the multiverse's inhabitants, established their realms in a time when the Astral was not a plane that anyone dwelled on. The vast majority of them still feel the same way. Additionally, most powers find it disturbing to spend much time around the dead gods themselves. They want no reminder of what could happen to them should things go terribly wrong.

ANUBIS: EVOLUTION OF A GOD

Anubis was once known as the guardian of the dead, part of the pantheon often referred to as the Egyptian gods. He watched over the dead spirits of the worshipers of his pantheon, keeping them from harm and making sure that they got to their proper place.

Because of this duty, Anubis was familiar with the Astral Plane, the place that dead primes traveled through to get to their proper plane. As he carried out his duties, he noticed the increasing number of dead gods that floated lifelessly through the Silver Void. After being exposed to this sobering – even frightening – sight, it is said that Anubis began to think thoughts that do not readily come to the mind of a god. Thoughts of his own death, and the deaths of those powers he valued, filled his awareness.

When Anubis saw mortal travelers attempting to tear apart the corpse of a fallen power, he took action.

Anubis cast off his divinity. He, or rather, *it* became something entirely different – something unique in all the

multiverse. Destroying the mortal offenders, Anubis became a steward over the inert powers, neither mortal nor power itself. It resides on the Astral all the time now, watching over the dead god isles. When it must be named, it is called the Guardian of Dead Gods, or sometimes even Chac Mool, by those few that know the dark of Anubis' change.

The Guardian still has worshipers, and even priests, on certain worlds. In effect, these priests gain their power from the entire Egyptian pantheon (making them clerics rather than specialty priests), although they may not even realize this.

In its current role, the Guardian has no realm. A body never encounters it by chance – only when one of the dead gods is threatened in some way. What constitutes a threat is still dark, even among the most wizened graybeards. The githyanki build their fortresses upon the rocky isles, and the Guardian does not seem to mind.

The former power retains its appearance as a sleek, jackal-headed man with dark, probing eyes and a muscular frame. The Guardian is said to have a thronelike chair upon which it sits, taking copious notes on the nature of divine death. This, of course, is conjecture. No one has ever actually seen the chair or the book (although the Athar and the Godslayers – see the chapter called "Locations in Nowhere: Specific Astral Encounters" – would certainly like to).

THE ASTRAL IS THE DEAD-BOOK OF THE GODS.

— TARSHEVA LONGREACH, PLANEWALKER

CELESTIAN: THE STAR WANDERER

Even more enigmatic than most powers, Celestian is often thought of as the planewalker's deity. He is a patron of travelers and wanderers, particularly those that stray far from their homes. Though a wandering power, he spends most of his time journeying through the Astral, occasionally crossing into the Ethereal and Inner Planes.

When he appears physically – which is practically never – he's been described as a mature, black-skinned man with dark, knowledge-laden eyes. He clothes his tall frame in garments as black as night, and his symbol is seven gems which blaze with the colors of far-away suns.

Planewalker priests often dedicate themselves to Celestian, for not only does he watch over travelers, he dwells mostly on the Astral, meaning that his power (that is, his *priests'* power) is not diminished on any of the Outer Planes, as they are all adjacent to the Astral. A canny planewalker knows that a priest loses spellcasting ability as he travels farther away from the plane where his deity lives. As a result, priests who worship a god of the Astral – like Celestian – don't have to worry about this loss of spellcasting ability no matter where they go on the Outer Planes.

Celestian's priests are usually characterized by their gem-covered black cloaks which give the impression of a field of stars. These folks rarely build fixed places of worship, but they do occasionally build or arrange for the creation of way homes on the Astral – places a traveler can go for shelter and safety. No one ever stays in these places long, but they have saved many a wanderer with a bit of food and protection from the elements (such as psychic winds and worse . . .).

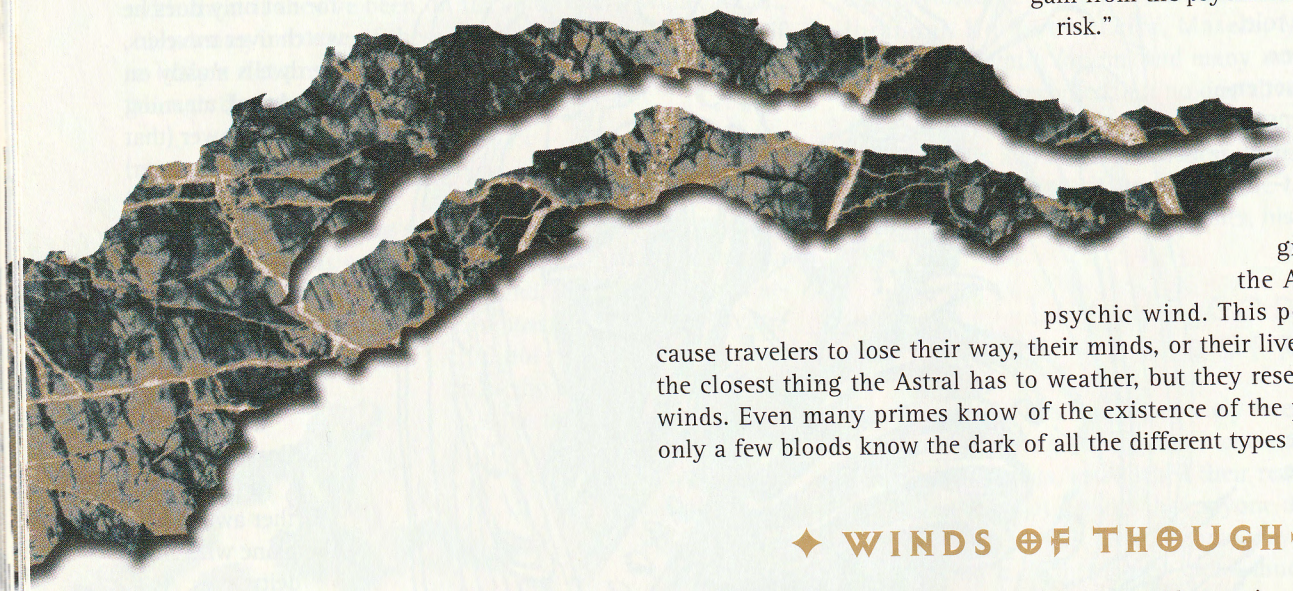
Mindstorms: Psychic Winds

"When you're in the desert, the wind blows hot, bringing stinging sand to tear at your eyes. In the frozen regions, the wind blows cold, ripping at your flesh with icy fingers of death. Likewise on the Astral Plane, the winds bring nothing but woe.

"If you're lucky, however, you'll find yourself caught outside one of the storms that some berk gave the far-too-gentle misnomer of psychic wind. You'll be in for a beautiful, majestic show.

"Some addle-coves got so lucky as to have actually come out the better for one of these mindstorms – they've gained some bit of knowledge, such as somebody's lost thought or important memory. Take it from an old hand, though – anything a body might gain from the psychic wind isn't worth the risk."

– Tarsheva Longreach, a planewalker



One of the greatest dangers on the Astral Plane is the psychic wind. This perilous effect can cause travelers to lose their way, their minds, or their lives. These winds are the closest thing the Astral has to weather, but they resemble no terrestrial winds. Even many primes know of the existence of the psychic winds, but only a few bloods know the dark of all the different types of astral storms.

✦ Winds of Thought ✦

Wisps of thoughts, lost memories, forgotten ideas, minor musings, subconscious fears, important concepts – these things are drawn to the Astral from the planes it touches. Psychic energies generated by thinking creatures drift unbidden onto the Astral Plane every moment, where they gather and collect.

THINKING I LIKE OTHER THOUGHTS PEOPLE'S. DIFFERENT SO OWN THAN MY THEY'RE.

— XAOSITECT COMING OUT OF THE PSYCHIC WIND

As mental energy swirls, congeals, and interacts, it forms what planewalkers have always called the psychic wind. The wind moves through the Astral, but it doesn't really feel like wind to a traveler. One planewalker (whose name is now forgotten) described it aptly as the plane itself rebelling against the thoughts that make up the wind. The moving, active mental energy disrupts the normal fabric of the plane, itself primarily a construct of the mind.

When the psychic wind strikes, it occurs in an area stretching anywhere from 3–300 (3d100) miles in diameter, or at least what passes for such in the nonspace of the Astral. From the outside, this affected area looks much like a storm on the Prime Material Plane – dark, roiling skies, punctuated by occasional flashes of energy. Within the storm, everything grows dark (travelers can use fire or magic to create light, but infravision does not work). It remains dark but calm for two to three minutes, after which everything in the area begins to vibrate, warp, and distort. These effects last for up to 30 minutes. Activity during this time is virtually impossible, for all senses (including orientation) are useless, betrayed by the warping effect of the wind.

ILL EFFECTS

Travelers caught in the psychic wind face great danger. Once within the affected area, any berk who tries to escape'll probably hit the blinds. No one can keep any sense of direction, and normal astral movement doesn't always work. The best plan is to simply "ride out" the storm as best as possible. This usually requires a fair amount of luck. Unlucky victims might find themselves, when the storm is over, in an area of the Astral completely different from that which they occupied before the storm. Others are forced into nearby (or not so nearby) color pools.

Sometimes worse than the physical relocation that occurs are the mental effects of being assaulted by these stray thoughts given motion and substance. The psychic wind can buffet a basher's mind with so many mental images and thoughts that the sod's brain becomes overloaded and shuts down completely.

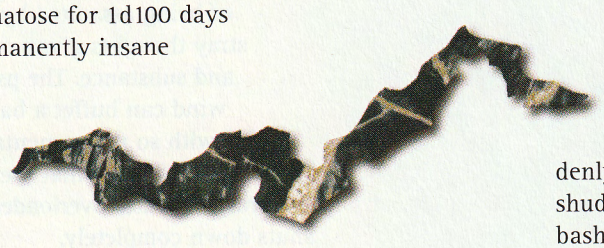
There is no shelter (aside from Celestian way homes) from the psychic wind. The mental storms can affect even permanent, fixed objects like the floating islands or the dead gods themselves. They have only a tenth of the chance that an individual character has of being tossed about the Astral, but they can be moved. Obviously, inanimate objects are immune to the mind-influencing effects of the psychic wind.

Psychic winds always blow somewhere on the Astral. A typical traveler has about a 2% chance to encounter one on a given journey, but if this happens, there's only about a 40% chance that he's actually caught in it.

The effects generated by the wind can be determined on Table II. Location effects are generated for the entire planewalking group, but mental effects are handled individually.

TABLE II: EFFECTS OF PSYCHIC WINDS

Location Effects (Physical Travelers)	
01–40	Diverted 1d6 days off course
41–60	Diverted 3d10 days off course
61–80	Completely lost
81–00	Sent through random color pool
Location Effects (Astral Travelers)	
01–40	Diverted 1d6 days off course
41–60	Diverted 3d10 days off course
61–80	Completely lost
81–97	Silver cord damaged, returned to real body
98–00	Silver cord snapped, traveler slain
Mental Effects	
01–40	Stunned for 1d6 rounds
41–50	Affected as a *confusion* spell for 3d8 rounds
51–60	Unconscious for 1d10 hours
61–80	Affected as a *fear* spell for 2d10 rounds
81–90	Affected as a *feeblemind* spell for 1d20 hours
91–95	Temporarily insane for 1d4 days
96–99	Comatose for 1d100 days
00	Permanently insane



BENEFICIAL EFFECTS

In the vast scheme of things, the chance of learning some vital or even relevant bit of information in the psychic wind is almost nil. Nevertheless, everyone's thoughts go into the Astral, so the potential to become privy to information on a topic of interest always exists. The DM makes the ultimate decision as to whether this happens and what details to include, but it should be extremely rare – probably never more than once to a single character ever. The dangers of the psychic wind should always be far, *far* more prevalent than any possible benefit.

Despite the difficulty, individuals who call themselves "thought stalkers" purposely seek the winds and ride through them. These barmies protect themselves with mental defense spells, magical items, or psionics (all of which work, apparently, to varying degrees) and seek to gather as many random thoughts as they can so that they can use or sell any valuable information they find.

STORMS

Despite the terminology used, the psychic wind described above isn't a true storm. As dangerous as a normal encounter with the psychic wind is, a psychic storm is much more horrible. These very rare occurrences result directly from an influx of dangerous thoughts from some other plane. "Dangerous thoughts," in this case, are those of strong fear, hatred, or other emotion found in great amounts. When a great disaster strikes, a huge battle occurs, or some unique event results from belief (like the passing of a gate-town from the Outlands to another plane), the ripple of thought carries to the Astral and forms a true storm of psychic wind.

When this occurs, a huge, almost immeasurable section of the Astral is affected. The storm carries with it the same threats as those detailed above (adding 20 to the location and mental effects rolls), as well as the ability to literally tear the Astral asunder. If a psychic storm strikes, there's a 10% chance that it rips a hole in the plane itself. This causes everything within 10–1,000 (1d100 × 10) yards to be thrust from the Astral to a random plane that touches it and tears a like amount of matter from the other plane and deposits it on the Astral. If no matter is near enough to be moved (on either or both sides of the hole), the hole remains open for 1d4 days, functioning as a gateway between the two planes. The Astral repairs this rent by forming a color pool that leads to the affected plane.

BREEZES

Not all psychic wind occurrences are devastating and deadly (though most are). Sometimes, a body'll find himself on the Astral and a thought will come suddenly to him. This notion's often accompanied by a slight shudder of the plane itself, but no other visible effect. Any basher who has experienced this has felt a psychic breeze. That is to say, they've experienced a psychic wind so minor that it does not carry with it the normal effects attributed to the psychic wind.

These stray thoughts are virtually always unintelligible or meaningless little memories or musings along the lines of "I'd better watch that," or "I've got an itch." The disturbing part about these thoughts is that a body knows they aren't his.

WINDS OF FUTURE AND PAST

Because the Astral Plane exists outside of time, the thoughts and memories that form psychic winds don't always have to be from a time concurrent to those experiencing them. That is to say, thoughts from the distant past or the future (relative to the traveler in the storm) can buffet a victim caught by the psychic wind. This facet of psychic wind does not actually change the effects of a normal encounter, but it does open up the possibility of gaining images or ideas from the distant past or those that haven't even yet been conceived.

This is the only facet of temporal displacement that occurs on the Astral. Only thoughts are not subject to the harsh, unavoidable regime of time – physical beings (even those projecting astral forms) and objects (all matter) obey the rules of time and do not ever move forward or backward.

✦ EMOTIONAL TEMPESTS ✦

Some psychic winds are driven by emotions rather than thoughts. More insidious in their effect, these winds prove to be more perilous than the common variety. Emotional tempests either infuse those caught within them with emotion, or they drain such feelings. Many times, individuals caught within the influence of the same storm at the same time will be affected differently. Sods caught in the storm must make a saving throw versus paralyzation or they will experience one of the following results:

- Drain All Emotions. For 1d2 days, the victim can feel no emotion. The character will experience no highs or lows, no strong motivations, and no real fears.
- Drain a Single Emotion. One emotion (DM's choice or use Table III below) is drained from the victim for 1d4 days. During this time, the poor sod cannot feel this particular emotion no matter what happens.
- Infuse with a Single Emotion. For 1d2 days, the victim trapped in the storm will be overcome with a single feeling (DM's choice or use Table III). This feeling will override other, natural emotions, potentially affecting his activities during this time. If the character is put in a situation where the overriding emotion might cause him to do something that would normally be inimicable to him, a successful Wisdom check will allow him to keep his head about him in regard to that one action.
- Overload with Emotions. This happens when a victim is given huge doses of multiple emotions. The sod is knocked unconscious for 1d4 days and upon wakening must make a saving throw versus paralysis each day for 1d10 days or be infused with a single emotion (a different one each day).

Use Table III as an aid in determining an affected emotion.

TABLE III: EMOTIONS

01–20	Hate
21–40	Love
41–55	Sorrow
56–70	Joy
71–80	Fear
81–90	Envy
91–00	Zeal

REMEMBER, BERK,
THIS WHOLE
"MULTIVERSAL BACKDROP"
THEORY ON THE ASTRAL
IS JUST A THEORY.
NOBODY KNOWS
THE REAL DARK ON ANYTHING.
THAT'S WHY IT'S CALLED
THE DARK.

— HAVELIND DAYMARK, BLEAKER

✦ DREAMSTORMS ✦

One of the strangest types of psychic wind is fueled by the mental energy of dreams rather than conscious thought. These dreamstorms are rare, but when they blow through the Astral, interesting things happen on both the Astral and the planes that it borders. The energies of this kind of storm affect only the sleeping mind. When it passes through the Astral, anyone in its path that is asleep suddenly finds himself dreaming someone else's dream. His mind is flooded with images probably completely alien to him. He wakes without feeling rested, penalized the whole next day by a –1 to all die rolls. More severely, however, he must make a saving throw versus spell or react (upon wakening) as though by a *fear* spell, fleeing in a random direction.

Lasting effects include a phobia regarding whatever was dreamed about. Some sods have been peery forever after that someone else might be seeing *their* dreams. Such effects must be worked out by the DM.

Dreamstorms can have other effects, too. A whole group of people sleeping during a dreamstorm can have the same dream. This often results in mass hysteria and widespread paranoia. People affected often attribute such occurrences to omens or purposeful sendings, often interpreting the dreams to forecast some coming doom. (Why it's always doom and not something good is any basher's guess.)

Dreamstorms are the only known type of psychic wind that can affect folks not on the Astral Plane.

Fire in the skies,
Blood in the water.
Look to the spirit,
Turn from sensation.

THE GITHYANKI

Threat comes from beyond,
Safety from within.

Crush flesh and bone,
Mind and spirit soar.
Inner passions rule,
Change destroys all.

Threat comes from beyond,
Safety from within.

– "The Eri'in," githyanki hymn

LIVE,
BUT ONLY IF
YOU LIVE FREE.

— GITH

No other race in the multiverse has triumphed over hardship as the githyanki and the githzerai. In many ways, the two are inextricably linked. Yet none can deny that they are the bitterest of foes. The githyanki race has been shaped by their hardships, their hatred, and their environment.

✦ DEEPEST, DARKEST HISTORY ✦

Note: This information comes from *A Glimpse Through the Mists*, a tome of ancient lore. The book's sources are occasionally suspect, and it often presents as fact that which others call legend, but it is probably more accurate than not.

In a time before most of the prime worlds known today were born, when the gate-towns of the Outlands all went by different names, when beings that could recall days before the creation of then-bejeweled Sigil still existed, the illithids held an ancient empire. This great empire stretched throughout many prime worlds, infested both Astral and Ethereal, and threatened the borders of many of the Outer Planes. The mind flayer dominion was so powerful that vast planar armies marshaled to defend their respective realms. Even the fiends paused in their eternal Blood War long enough to determine if the illithids would attack the Lower Planes as well. Despite the fact that most tomes of historical lore make no mention of it (for truly ancient was this time, and older still the roots of the illithid empire), never has there been a time since then when the entire multiverse has been so vexed by a single threat.

Salvation came not from without, but rather within. The illithids had enslaved all of the humans that they had come upon and (as they are still wont to do) used them as beasts of burden and livestock upon which to feed. These slaves were without number, and many were actually descendants of those

who had originally been conquered, so that they knew no life beyond mind flayer enslavement, nor did their parents, nor indeed even their parents before them. Slavery and other unspeakable influences of the illithids twisted these wretches in form as well as spirit, but many still clung to the ever-present need for freedom.

Slave revolts clawed at the illithid empire, but never posed a true threat. What hope did poorly armed, malnourished slaves have against the awesome mental powers of their illithid masters? The slaves knew that only through the development of their own psionic powers, coupled with martial strength, would they ever emerge victorious. From their number arose a champion, greater in mental strength and resolve (and most likely hatred) than her peers.

Her name was Gith.

With her leadership at its crest, the wave of slaves washed over the illithid empire without mercy. Fueled by her power and rage, the rebellion tore asunder the mind flayer's dominion, casting the shreds to the wind. Not every illithid was killed, and not every stronghold fell (as was Gith's wish), but the ties of the empire were broken, and the defeat was one from which the mind flayers would never completely recover. The slaves were freed, most tasting the sweet nectar of liberty for the first time.

"At this point, when Gith ordered her people to continue their campaign to annihilate the illithids and

establish an empire of conquest of their own, not all followed her command. A new figure, by the name of Zerthimon, had gained a significant following and challenged Gith's plans and her leadership. Gith was evil, the newcomer claimed, and would lead the people into darkness and tyranny not unlike the illithids themselves.

Thus, no sooner had the people finished their war for freedom than they engaged in a bitter and bloody civil war. In the ensuing conflict, Zerthimon was killed and his followers, now called githzerai, retreated to Limbo in defeat. The losses that Gith's forces had sustained, however, were too severe for them to press forward in further conquest. Gith led her people, who now called themselves githyanki, "the children of Gith," to the conquered illithid settlements on the Astral Plane. There, she believed, they would be safest until such time as they could once again begin their conquest of the multiverse, as well as the eradication of the illithids and the githzerai.

Soon after the githyanki had established themselves in the virtually lifeless Astral, a wizardess named Vlaakith began advising Gith in matters of state. She advised the ruler that the githyanki were in need of allies, and Gith reluctantly agreed. After a failed attempt to gain the slaadi, Limbo's native race, as allies against the githzerai, Vlaakith advised Gith to descend into Baator to meet with the legendary Tiamat.

What actually occurred at that meeting is one of the best-kept secrets in all the planes. Simply put, no one knows but Gith, Tiamat, and apparently one of Tiamat's consorts, a red great wyrm named Ephelomon. What is known is that Ephelomon came to the Astral and instructed Vlaakith that Gith had named the wizardess as the githyanki leader's successor, and that she was to carry on her legacy of conquest, for Gith would not be returning. The great wyrm also announced that an eternal pact between red dragons and the githyanki was now in place.

Ephelomon's words proved true, as the githyanki found when they traveled to the Prime Material. Whenever, wherever the githyanki arrived on the Prime, red dragons were willing to work with them in their schemes and goals. Vlaakith and her descendants have always ruled the githyanki since then, but they have slowly lost the resolve and focus of Gith. The githyanki have become fragmented, forming small isolated groups rather than maintaining a single, unified nation. Although no conflict exists between the groups, and they all ultimately serve the queen, each has its own separate goals.

As a final note, some texts (although not *A Glimpse Through the Mists)* state that the woman Gith took her name from the prime-material world from which most or all of her people originated. Others neglect mentioning the leader at all, but point out the reference to the name of the world as the root of the githyanki and githzerai names. Too many sources, however, mention Gith specifically and with such detail to be discounted. Although she lived almost unimaginably far in the past, Gith *did* exist and was unquestionably instrumental in the liberation of her people.

GITHYANKI ECOLOGY AND PHYSIOLOGY

The githyanki resemble the humans that they descended from in the most basic ways only. While still humanoid, their rough, leathery skin is pale yellow, and their features are gaunt in the extreme. Fact is, some githyanki could be described as skeletal in appearance. Their black eyes've sunk far back into their long, angular skulls, and their noses've receded to become very small and highly placed, giving their entire face the appearance of having been stretched vertically. Raven-black or fire-red hair adorns their heads and is usually worn to reveal their pronounced, pointed ears which are often marked by ridges gained in dark ceremonies.

The dark of it is that while they were illithid slaves, the githyanki (and githzerai) underwent horrible experiments by their masters in an attempt to make them great warriors for the mind flayer empire. They were also forced to work in areas no human was ever meant to be, where strange energies altered them for all time. Lastly, those who would one day become githyanki altered themselves with their own incredible resolve and hatred, twisting themselves in mind, body, and spirit.

As a result, githyanki have an inherent magical nature. Each can travel the planes at will, using an ability most nongithyanki call *plane shift*, and the githyanki call *jez'rathki*, meaning literally "seeping through the cracks." They're also capable of other magical skills not available to humans or other races (see below).

'Course, most githyanki exhibit psionic talents as well. As with humans, all attacks, defenses, disciplines, sciences, and devotions are available. These abilities give a wide gamut of powers to the githyanki, shaping their outlook, tactics, and strength.

A githyanki's lifespan is approximately twice that of a human's. However, since they do not age on the Astral Plane (where time does not pass), githyanki lives usually end up lasting much longer (to the perceptions of those involved). The githyanki have developed a spell so that time does not catch up with them when they leave their home plane. If a githyanki does not have access to such magic, he may be loath to leave the Astral, especially if he is old, because of the instant aging that would occur. Those that frequent other planes do not worry as much since they haven't cheated time as much as other githyanki.

Like everyone else, githyanki don't need to eat on the Astral Plane. For their frequent off-plane missions and adventures, however, they usually take food and supplies with them. Although omnivorous, the githyanki digestive system (which has atrophied slightly due to long periods of dormancy) requires frequent repasts of meat. Hunters sometimes travel to other planes to obtain meat, although astral whales're also common prey. If necessary (that is, if they are desperate), the githyanki'll eat fallen foes, except that they'll never partake of the foul flesh of illithids, and they

are not cannibals, so they also refuse the flesh of githzerai and other githyanki. Farmers called g"lathk raise fungi and other plants that don't require sunlight within githyanki cities and fortresses.

The most pronounced deviation of the githyanki from their human origins is that they have become egg-layers. This is either the result of some experiment of the illithids or the exposure to some strange astral energies. In either case, this method of reproduction closely resembles that of reptilian creatures. Within githyanki communities, there is always an egg chamber (or possibly many of them), where all eggs are kept and guarded. Caretakers raise the young in a communal fashion – there are no githyanki families.

Because of the lack of actual time passage on the Astral, caretakers (known as *varsh*) of eggs and young, must *plane shift* the objects of their attention to another plane (usually the Prime) periodically so that they can mature. Because of this hassle, and because githyanki live so long, the birth rate is usually fairly low. Once beyond the very young stage, githyanki trainees are usually forced to spend a great deal of their time on the Prime or another plane, both for the experience and so that they will finish physically maturing in a temporal environment.

✦ GITHYANKI NATURE ✦

The githyanki mind has become a twisted, alien thing when compared to its human origins. Their culture's filled with – perhaps based on – contradictions. They value isolation and conquest, inner strength and material possessions, obedience and freedom.

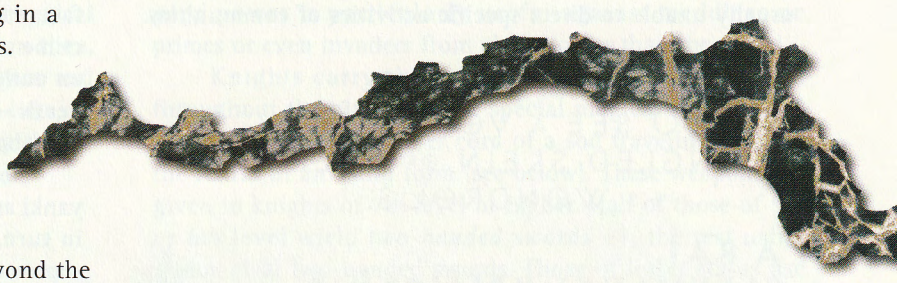
As a race, they're undeniably evil. They hate virtually anything not githyanki and delight in the conquest, enslavement, torture, and destruction of all not of their race. Yet among their own kind, the githyanki are peaceful, polite, and respectful. No githyanki would ever attack another willingly, for all of their aggression and hatred (which is considerable) is focused outward.

MILITARY MINDSET

Though obviously all githyanki are individuals, a body can make a few generalizations about them as a culture. They're first and foremost a warrior culture, with both males and females training to be either fighters or wizards (or in some cases, both). Weapons and armor are the most valued possessions and're always ornate and well-cared for.

Skill in combat, whether it be physical or magical in nature, determines a body's rank in githyanki society (see below). Interestingly, unlike many warrior cultures, rank is not based on actual achievements or victories in battle, but on pure skill, which is tested and classified by those above the individual in question (ultimately, for the most powerful, by the queen herself).

In order to foster efficiency and greater capabilities in combat, githyanki learn to operate well together. They do all of their training, living, and fighting with the same group of individuals. Each individual's rights're well-respected by every other individual as well as by the society as a whole, so these close personal ties are easily established. They enable githyanki to communicate complex ideas among themselves in very short periods of time. A githyanki commander can relay the dark of a situation as well as his plans to those under him with just a few simple words and gestures.



RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALITY

The githyanki consider personal freedoms and individuality highly important. Their history of enslavement, though long since past, shapes even their current actions and attitudes. Most githyanki would choose death over surrender if defeat meant captivity or slavery. For themselves, they make slaves of their enemies only for short periods of intense humiliation. Slaves're always ritually sacrificed to the queen, eventually.

Individuality's expressed through dress, art, and even combat techniques. This is where much of the inherent contradictions of githyanki nature lie. While they profess to be more interested in the inner being (hence their fascination with psionics), githyanki focus much of their time and energy on outward appearances. Flamboyance in combative style is common among githwarriors, as it is in spellcasting among the warlocks. Githyanki use large, sweeping gestures and sword strikes with intricate flourishes and practiced movements.

Likewise, githyanki dress and manufactured items – in particular weapons and armor – are gaudy, elaborate affairs. Baroque ornamentation and design (sometimes with a sinister style) covers their possessions, giving githyanki an ostentatious image. 'Course, these items're well-cared for and are always pristine in appearance. Warriors spend a great deal of their off-hours mending, polishing, sharpening, and generally maintaining the condition of the weapons and armor.

Not surprisingly, githyanki art's an important facet of their society. In addition to the ornate decoration of their weapons and dress, they create elaborate sculptures and paintings, often with what humans would call a surrealistic nature. The githyanki artists claim that long-term exposure to the astral energies have given them the power to see things most mortals cannot, and their art is actually realistic

depictions of what they see. Even drama, poetry, and song are created by the githyanki, although these are so strange (often actually containing psionic elements or references to astral intricacies) that most nongithyanki are literally unable to comprehend them. Most githyanki artists, poets, or other creators don't pursue the arts full-time, and instead are warriors or warlocks who dabble in their spare time.

Though subject to the rulership of the queen and their other superiors, githyanki retain a great deal of personal freedom. This is true in part because of the isolation of most githyanki communities, even from each other. The queen's usually unable to direct specific activities of communities.

> ⊕U+ +HERE,
> Y⊕U SEE A V⊕ID. I SEE
> A +ANGLED SKEIN ⊕F ENERGY.
> I+'S W⊕NDR⊕US.
>
> — N'A'RAI,
> A GI+HYANKI HR'A'CKNIR

Further, no githyanki in a position of power would violate an individual's rights of privacy, speech, movement, or expression without very good reason. It's simply in their nature to preserve and respect such rights. For the most part, a githyanki can flap his bone-box or come and go as he pleases.

⊕RDER ENF⊕RCED UP⊕N +HE CHA⊕+IC

'Course, a githyanki loses his rights of individuality by either committing a crime or failing in an important task. In fact, such a failure is usually considered to be the greatest crime of all, for it is a crime against the queen herself. Such an outlook gives warriors even more reasons to fight to the death – defeat in an important battle usually means the dead-book for githwarriors anyway.

No official code of githyanki laws exists. Most githyanki are too individualistic for that. Instead, the queen and, in turn, each community's leader (sometimes called the supreme leader), issue orders that must be followed. Respect for the high-ups and the threat of death ensures that

these commands are virtually always obeyed. Githyanki so chaotic in nature that they cannot abide such rigidity either leave their race or find themselves well-lanned in the githyanki version of the leafless tree.

INSULAR BEHAVIOR

Githyanki disdain for all things nongithyanki makes them unwilling to learn the languages, skills, or spells of other races. Likewise, while they will take trophies from fallen foes, they're unlikely to use the spoils, unless it's a magical item so powerful that its use cannot be resisted. Even then, they rationalize the act by saying that such an elegant and strong weapon was probably originally a githyanki item, or the knowledge to create it originated with their people.

SOCIETAL ✦ STRUCTURES ✦

For a people with strong individualistic tendencies, the society of the githyanki is well-defined and neatly structured. Some have observed that the githyanki are inwardly orderly, but chaotic in respect to everyone else. Their society is divided among the specialized githyanki professions.

KNIGHTS

Knights are the greatest of the githwarriors, and therefore some of the most influential of the githyanki. These folks're warriors who have devoted themselves to the direct service of the lich-queen (before her reign, no githyanki knights existed). They serve as her eyes and ears in all situations, so any important mission'll have at least one knight, and all fortresses, towns, or outposts also have a knight. People both revere and fear the knights, for they know that they report directly to the queen. Failure in githyanki society is bad, but failure in front of a knight is usually a fatal mistake.

Knights never become high-ups in the conventional sense but are always involved in important decisions, and it is forbidden to keep secrets from them. Essentially, they function outside the normal hierarchy. In addition to serving as elite combat troops, knights monitor internal matters and enforce the will of the queen and whatever supreme leader they are assigned to.

Knights are as close to religious figures as the githyanki have, since there are no priests or clerics of any kind. The githyanki are too centered around the concept of individuality to have a formal, organized religion, but since the coming of the lich-queen, their reverence for her approaches worship. They recognize no other gods. It is difficult for a people who build their homes on the backs of dead powers to recognize such beings to be divine.

As they focus so much devotion toward their mistress, the knights gain quasi-religious powers. Each knight has the special abilities of a paladin, except that they are perverted toward evil. These reversed abilities include *detect good* (as the spell) at will, *cause disease* (as the spell) once per week for every five levels, *protection from good, 10′ radius* (continuous), and they can cause wounds by their touch, inflicting 2 points of damage per experience level once per day. Like paladins, they're immune to disease and gain a +2 bonus to all saving throws. Because the lich-queen's not an actual deity, they gain no power over undead and don't receive any spells from her. The *protection from good* power is particularly useful against meddlesome primes or even invaders from planes other than the Astral.

Knights carry the infamous *silver swords* known throughout the planes. These special magical two-handed blades can sever the silver cord of a sod traveling through the Astral in an astral form (see below). These weapons are given to knights of 7th level or higher. Half of those of 5th or 6th level wield *two-handed swords +1*, the rest using nonmagical two-handed swords. Those of lesser status use either long swords and shields or two-handed swords. Knights always wear plate mail or plate armor – it doesn't affect their movement on the Astral Plane at all.

Some knights ride nightmares into battle, but only when the fiendish steeds' combat abilities are important, because the knights are faster unmounted.

GITHWARRIORS

Githyanki fighters're called githwarriors. While not as respected as knights, they can raise themselves to positions of real authority. Most aspire to become supreme leaders of a fortress or city. The supreme leader's will is unchallenged and he or she has complete control over all aspects of life of those under him or her.

As a githwarrior rises in the ranks, he gains the title *sarth,* or "sergeant." From there, a warrior can raise to the rank of *kith'rak*, or "captain." Kith'rak are answerable only to the supreme leader they serve (and as always, the queen). Once again, it's important to remember that knights function outside this ranking system.

Githwarriors use a variety of weapons. Although long swords and two-handed swords are the most common, githwarriors also wield bardiches, halberds, large spiked flails, scythes, and barbed whips. A recent innovation is the triple crossbow, a baroque-looking affair that can fire three bolts separately or simultaneously as a light crossbow. Half of the githwarriors of 5th level or over are given *two-handed swords +1*, while those of 7th level or higher have a 60% chance of having a *long sword +2*.

Those with one-handed weapons use shields or a second weapon in their other hand. All githwarriors wear chain mail, banded mail, plate mail, or plate armor.

WARLOCKS

Warlocks're githyanki wizards, the title having nothing to do with gender. To the githyanki, magic's just another tool or weapon, and so these individuals gain no greater or lesser station than nonwizards.

Despite all of the utility of wizard spells, warlocks are primarily combat mages – warriors with spells rather than swords. *Magic missile, Melf's acid arrow, fireball, lightning bolt,* and *ice storm* are some of their favored spells. Direct, destructive magic is their forte, with other sorts of spells used only when necessary. Although necromancy that involves the killing or stealing of life force is also used, githyanki warlocks rarely animate the dead.

GITH'S BLOOD!
THEY LOST ANOTHER SWORD?
WHERE WAS IT THIS TIME . . .

— TEHV'IN,
A GITHYANKI KNIGHT
SPECIALIZING IN
"RETRIEVAL"

Warlocks can be any manner of specialty wizard that a human can be, including wild mages. These wizards particularly like the school of evocation/invocation for its destructive spells. They have all of the proper spell keys for casting spells on the Astral, and many know keys for the various Lower Planes as well. A rare few have access to spell keys created to cope with Limbo's chaotic ways, in order to make attacks against the githzerai.

Warlocks obviously never use armor, and those of very high level usually discard the use of weapons as well. Those of low or medium level use daggers.

GISH

Githyanki call those who are trained in both fighting and spellcasting *gish*, meaning "skilled." These talented individuals are rare and well-respected, often becoming leaders or other people of influence.

These men and women are multiclassed fighter/wizards – the only type of multiclass allowed to githyanki. Gish are rarely specialty wizards, but, like the warlocks, have the proper spell keys needed on the Astral.

Gish use the same sort of weapons that regular githwarriors use, except that they rarely use two-handed weapons and never use shields. They have the same chances for magical weapons as do their nonspellslinging brethren.

PSIONICISTS

For those DMs who use this optional character class, it is also available for githyanki. About three-fourths of the githyanki are wild talents, and a great many have the special training of a psionicist. In virtually every respect, these cutters are treated as warlocks and are sometimes even called warlocks. The githyanki do not distinguish much between magic and psionics despite their great differences – they are both just weapons to be used to their fullest extent.

MLAR

A profession unique to the githyanki, mlar are magical artisans and craftsmen. Most specialize in the construction and repair of buildings, tools, weapons, and other needed things, but others use their powers to create sculpture and other art pieces. For all basic purposes, these individuals are noncombatants and hold a special purpose in githyanki society. Almost all items – including buildings and fortifications – are constructed by mlar, as are all the astral ships. Githyanki wizards, working with mlar, construct magical items like the *silver swords*.

These githyanki're treated as wizards, except that they have no spellcasting abilities. Instead, they have the following special magical powers, each usable once per day for every five experience levels. (Note to DMs: There should be no player character mlar.)

WALL OF STONE. As the spell.

STONE SHAPE. As the spell.

FABRICATE. As the spell.

DECORATE. Using this power, the mlar can create intricate, elaborate, permanent decoration on a single object which does not significantly change the shape or strength of the object.

COLOR. This ability allows the mlar to change the color of an object permanently (or until the mlar wishes to change the color again).

CONSTRUCT. A mlar can take existing materials and make them into a desired product (sword, shoe, rope, building, wall, sculpture, etc.) at ten times the rate a normal individual could. Basically, the mlar can do the work of ten nonmlar.

Repair. This ability allows the mlar to restore a damaged or broken object to its original state, as long as at least 75% of the object is intact. Greater damage cannot be repaired and must be rebuilt.

Fortify. The skill insures that the creations of a mlar are twice as durable and resistant to damage as a normal creation of the same type.

HR'A'CKNIR

On the Astral Plane, there are energies flowing through the void found nowhere else on the planes. No one's done a job of finding, cataloging, and experimenting with these energies like the githyanki. These energies, they've found, can be used for various purposes. Hr'a'cknir are healers (physical, mental, and spiritual), craftsmen, seers, and transport specialists. Each focuses his skills on one type of energy and its usage.

Hr'a'cknir *ghustil* are healers who can focus astral energies and gain the following spell-like abilities: *cure light wounds* (3 times per day), *cure disease* (1 time per week), *cure blindness or deafness* (1 time per week), *remove paralysis* (1 time per week), *remove curse* (1 time per week), and *restoration* (1 time per month).

The *var'ith'n* are hr'a'cknir who collect astral energies in conjunction with mlar craftsmen in order to construct special creations like astral ships.

Senja'si are githyanki seers who look into the astral energies to predict the future and view the present and past. Each has the ability of the astrology proficiency, the *clairvoyance* and *clairaudience* spells (1 time per day each), and *legend lore* (1 time per week).

Lastly, the *y'rn* are transport specialist hr'a'cknir. By utilizing the currents of astral energies, they can *teleport* up to 2,000 pounds of material anywhere on the Astral Plane one time per day.

All hr'a'cknir abilities are usable only on the Astral Plane. In all respects other than those presented here, these individuals are treated as wizards with abilities rather than spells. Like mlar, hr'a'cknir cannot be player characters.

G"LA+HK

For lack of a better term, g"lathk are githyanki farmers. Fact is, however, they are much more than that. Harnessing the strange, astral energies of their plane, as well as employing a little of their race's inherent magic, the g"lathk grow food where nothing should be able to grow. Much of what they produce is a funguslike organism, which requires no sunlight to thrive. Others cultivate and harvest a tiny grub that grows only within the flesh of one of the dead god islands. Still others grow tiny plants and animals in tanks or pools of specially treated water.

Despite their important duties, these githyanki do not have the respect that warriors or warlocks do. Often, g"lathk are former warriors who have been injured in a debilitating way. Because githyanki need food only for when they are on another plane, there's not a need for huge numbers of these folks.

⊕+HERS

Other positions within githyanki society include caretakers (called *varsh*) that raise the young and provide them with their rudimentary training. Menial labor is often done by the young (while still training for their eventual position) or by slaves. There are githyanki merchants in larger communities (to transport and sell those goods made by the mlar), as well as criminals (though the githyanki flamboyant, straightforward style doesn't lend them to becoming good thieves).

TL'A'IKI+H

Tl'a'ikiths, also known as "sword spirits" (not to be confused with the residents of Acheron by the same name), are undead githyanki knights that remain on the Astral Plane (and sometimes other planes) as invisible spirits animating the sword they used in life.

Tl'a'ikiths hold a strange place in githyanki society. They no longer possess the ability to interact in any fashion other than combat – they cannot speak, and they cannot affect objects other than the *silver swords* they used in life. So these spirits act as guardians that watch over important locales, such as treasure vaults, egg chambers, and high-up quarters. The lich-queen's palace is said to have hundreds of these undead entities serving as an elite guard.

Although all githyanki are aware of the existence of tl'a'ikiths, they cannot communicate with them, so they are virtually ignored. Military commanders cannot count on the spirits to help, since they cannot give them orders, but the bloods usually know when and where they will appear. Overall, however, the spirits do as they please – which usually entails guarding an area they had regarded as important while they lived. They fight with the same abilities and skills that they had in life, save that they are now invisible spirits.

✦ THE LICH-QUEEN ✦

The most recent queen of the githyanki is also the longest reigning sovereign the race has ever had. Queen Vlaakith CLVII is most commonly called the lich-queen by non-githyanki, for that's exactly what she is. She's ruled her people for well over a thousand years, and there's really no end in sight. In fact, unlike all her predecessors, this Vlaakith is a lich, has no heirs, and in her undead state, is now unable to produce them. Should the lich-queen be destroyed, her aeons-old bloodline will die with her.

She dwells in the githyanki city of Tu'narath, arguably the largest and most important githyanki community. This community has a population of over 10,000 and yet is dominated by the fantastic, grand palace in which the lich-queen alone dwells.

Hideous in appearance, the lich-queen resembles an aged, blackened corpse with smoldering emerald eyes. She normally wears long purple robes with intricate gold embroidery, although she also favors a black cloak with a silver star pattern woven into it. Her office is marked by an elaborate headdress of gold and rubies, as well as a golden scepter encrusted with yet more rubies and topped with a head of a red dragon (legend has it that this device was given to the original Vlaakith by Tiamat's red consort, Ephelomon).

Vlaakith the Lich-Queen, M24 (Lich): AC –6; MV 6 (96 on the Astral Plane); hp 60; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; SA touch causes paralysis, sight causes fear in creatures of less than 5 HD for 5d4 rounds; SD +1 or better magical weapon to hit, immune to *charm, sleep, enfeeblement, polymorph, cold, electricity, insanity,* or *death* spells; MR 5%; SZ M (6'); ML fanatic (18); Int supra-genius (19); AL CE; XP 13,000.

Notes: Paralysis lasts until dispelled. Assume the lich-queen has numerous contingency-style spells active at any given time, utilizing her command of magic to its full extent.

Personality: Completely domineering, self-centered, and evil.

Special Equipment: cloak of protection +2, staff of the magi, robes of the archmagi, ring of protection +3, ring of spell turning.

Spells (5/5/5/5/5/5/5/5/4): 1st—*burning hands, charm person, chill touch, magic missile, phantasmal force;* 2nd—*blindness, blur, detect invisibility, ESP, ray of enfeeblement;* 3rd—*blink, dispel magic, feign death, fireball, hold person;* 4th—*charm monster, confusion, fear, improved invisibility, stoneskin;* 5th—*animate dead, chaos, cone of cold, dismissal, domination;* 6th—*contingency, death spell, geas, monster summoning IV, true seeing;* 7th—*finger of death, limited wish, monster summoning V, power word stun, prismatic spray;* 8th—*demand, mass charm, mind blank, permanency, power word blind;* 9th—*prismatic sphere (×2), wish (×3).*

Githyanki refer to her as the Revered Queen, and their adoration for her is as close as they get to actual worship. As the descendant of the original Vlaakith, the people see her as Gith's representative in all things. Even though they know she is a lich, they still follow her because they don't particularly care. Her word is law. Her word is truth. Without her, they believe, they couldn't survive – they'd risk the chance of enslavement by another race once again. With their fear of slavery so closely tied to their dependence upon the queen, it's not surprising that the loyalty of the githyanki to their ruler is so fanatical.

The lich-queen jealously guards her position. She devours the life essence of any githyanki blood that rises above 11th level (see below for what happens to player character githyanki), both in order to feed on their power and to eliminate potential future rivals. Despite the widespread loyalty of her people, the lich-queen is paranoid and occasionally delusional. She trusts no one and fears virtually everything and everyone – and her reaction to what she fears is to master or destroy it. As a result, nobody truly knows where her phylactery is hidden or even what it is. The most current chant has it that she's hidden it on one of the dead gods. Of course, because of her peery nature, no one has completely figured out the dark of her occasional barminess, although the cause might simply be her incredible longevity.

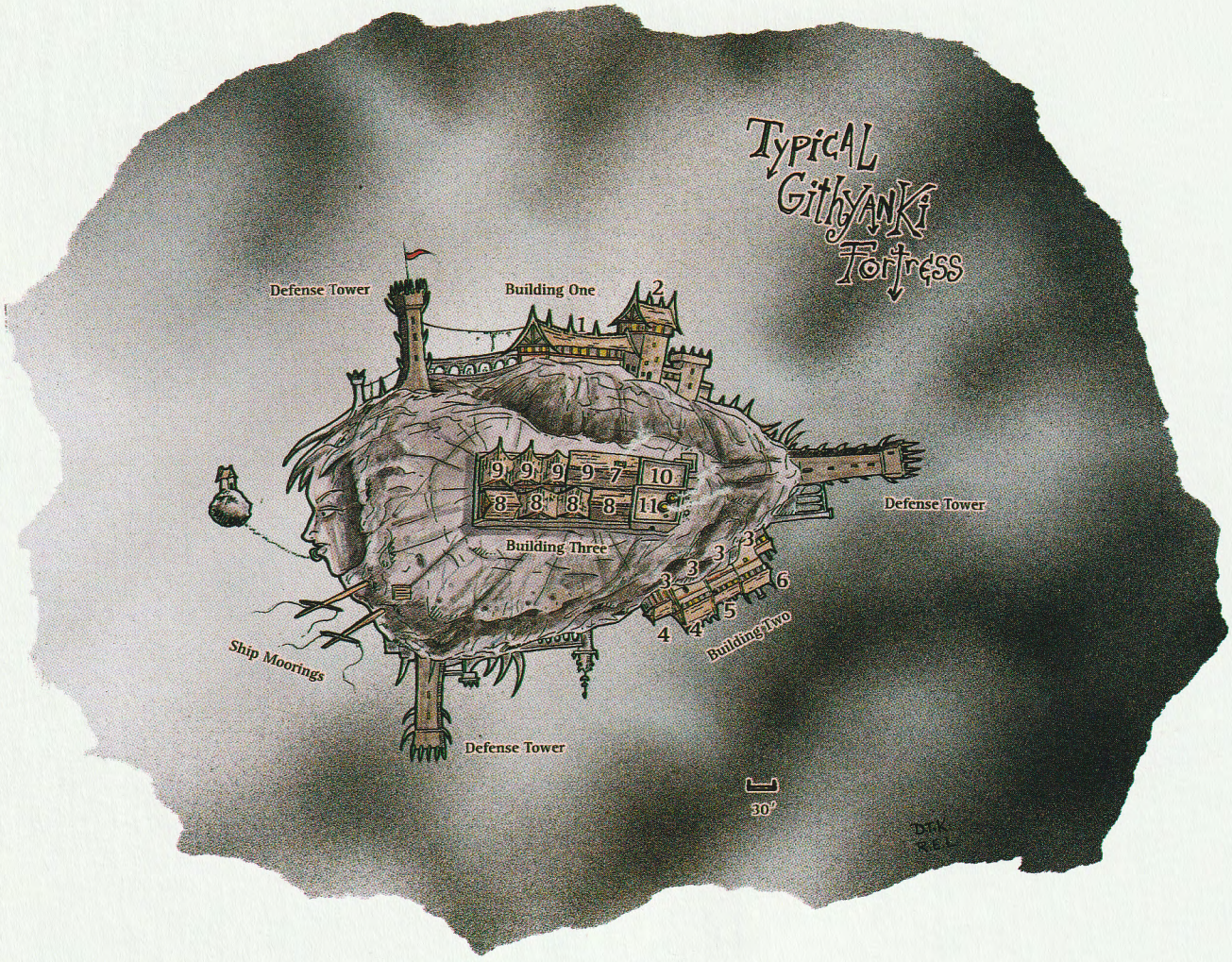
✦ ASTRAL COMMUNITIES ✦

The githyanki live on the Astral in fortresses and citadels, the largest of them being the size of cities and built upon the dead gods themselves. There, they conduct commerce, manufacture goods, and live their lives.

In comparison with many races, their communities are very militaristic in structure. Though they do not live in barracks, their homes are located and appointed as befits their rank. Each githyanki has his or her own individual abode, however – unless they willingly share it with someone close to them.

Since they have no family units at all, the githyanki form bonds with those that they train with. Training never stops, as each strives to be the best he can be in his individual occupation. Training centers, research facilities, libraries, and practice fields are some of the most frequented areas in a githyanki community – at least those large enough to support such resources.

Every community, no matter how small, has a safe location for egg storage (complete with varsh caretakers), a



crematorium for destroying the dead, and workshops for mlar and hr'a'cknir to practice their craft and produce needed items, equipment, and weapons.

Githyanki communities make use of the tiny birdlike creatures called astral streakers as messengers and even as scouts or spies. Magic or psionics allows them see what their avian agents have seen. They also keep spectral hounds as guardians and trackers. Neither creature is really regarded as a "pet," however. They are treated more like tools.

GITHYANKI CITIES

Tu'narath is the largest and greatest of the githyanki communities. It's built upon the body of an unnamed god, said to have been aeons-dead when even the githyanki came to the plane. The lich-queen dwells here, rarely leaving the inner sanctum of her gigantic palace.

Githmir is another major githyanki center, being the heart of githyanki commerce, particularly with other races. In this way, Githmir is the most cosmopolitan of all githyanki communities – humans, bariaur, fiends, and other races can be found here in small numbers (and in certain restricted areas). Most are of a neutral or (more likely) evil bent, since dealing with the githyanki is a little unpalatable to strictly good beings. Because of githyanki nature, the natives watch these visitors closely and never trust them.

T'n'ekris and Xamvadi'm are also well-known, populated githyanki cities. Each provides homes for approximately 8,000 githyanki. They are situated "far apart" as things are reckoned on the Astral, since they are rival communities. Though each serves the lich-queen, there is an age-old animosity between these two cities. Githyanki never war among themselves, but they can be quite snobbish toward each other at times.

The bulk of the githyanki population dwells in much smaller communities. The tiny fortresses which dot the Astral "landscape" are virtually countless.

A TYPICAL ✦ ASTRAL FORTRESS ✦

Though no two githyanki fortresses are exactly the same, the following is provided as an example of how a typical, small installation would appear. Note that the term fortress is both accurate and misleading. While this is a defensible structure, all githyanki holdings are "fortresses." The term should not be taken to imply a military fortification any more than any other githyanki citadel.

This fortress can be used as is, or it can be taken as a

sample of what one might look like as the DM designs his own. Refer to the map when reading the following text. Despite the fact that it was designed and built to be in a weightless environment, the citadel does not differ too much from one found on another plane, except that each building and tower has a different orientation. Many doors are located in the center of the wall rather than at the floor, and sometimes all surfaces (walls, ceiling, and floor) are utilized for furnishings and whatnot. Even though it is a place without gravity, things stay where a body puts them, so a table or shelf's contents, for example, stay put until someone moves them.

The entire fortress is ornately decorated. Statuary is commonplace. Bas reliefs can be found on every wall. While most are abstract, some depict githyanki passions: freedom, magic, psionics, their hatred for illithids and githzerai, etc.

This fortress is too small to warrant any full-time g"lathk to produce food. Instead, when someone requires food (only when trips to another plane are made), it is brought in from a larger community nearby. Some food can be found in the storage. Similar fortresses that do not have access to a larger support facility have a small g"lathk "garden" in an underground chamber under Building 3.

OUTER AREAS

Defense Tower. On the map provided, four defense towers are positioned about the island, each with a different orientation. Each is manned in times of conflict with at least one warlock or gish to cast spells. Five to ten githwarriors use crossbows or triple crossbows to cut down advancing foes. Of course, the number and placement of defense towers varies from fortress to fortress because of terrain, area covered, and so on.

Hound Kennel. Githyanki fortresses of this size keep approximately ten spectral hounds to use as guardians and hunting companions.

Ship Mooring. A fortress this size usually has only one or two astral ships stationed here, though there is room for four or five to dock.

BUILDING ONE

1. Common Room. Social activities (including dancing and theater performances) are conducted in this large room, as are required assemblies and other meetings.

2. Individual Quarters. All githyanki have their own individual (albeit small) quarters, though sometimes close friends or lovers live together (remember, githyanki have no family units). Githwarriors (about 40), warlocks (about 8), gish (2–3), mlar (2–4), and hr'a'cknir (1–2) dwell here. Higher ranking (in other words, higher level) githyanki have better quarters and possessions, with gish and hr'a'cknir being even more favored.

There are usually more quarters than inhabitants so that visiting githyanki have a place to stay.

BUILDING TWO

3. Sarth Quarters. Four warriors of this rank dwell in quarters that are somewhat larger than other githyanki quarters. Note that while sarth have nominal authority over other githyanki, most would avoid exerting this privilege over gish or higher-level warlocks (who cannot become sarth no matter what level they are).

4. Kith'rak Quarters. These are the fortress subcommanders. Two are typically stationed here, answering only to the leader (and possibly the knight).

5. Knight's Quarters. A typical fortress of this size has but a single knight who watches over the activities of the people and enforces the will of the lich-queen. Usually, the knight's quarters are second only to the leader's in lavishness and comfort.

6. Leader's Quarters. With command over every githyanki in the fortress, the leader has the finest of everything the citadel can provide.

BUILDING THREE

7. Egg Chamber. The varsh caretakers of the eggs dwell here alongside their charges, although in a citadel this small, there are probably only one or two caretakers. This chamber holds 10–40 eggs in various stages of incubation.

8. Storage Rooms. This is where all the supplies required by the citadel are stored. These rooms take up most of the building.

9. Workshops. Three to five rooms in this building are dedicated to creating and repairing equipment, weapons, and other items. The fortress's mlar spend most of their time here, with hr'a'cknir occasionally helping.

10. Crematorium. This is a fiery furnace where the githyanki burn their dead. A short ceremony is conducted beforehand, dedicating the spirit to the lich-queen (though githyanki do not go to her as petitioners – she's not a real power).

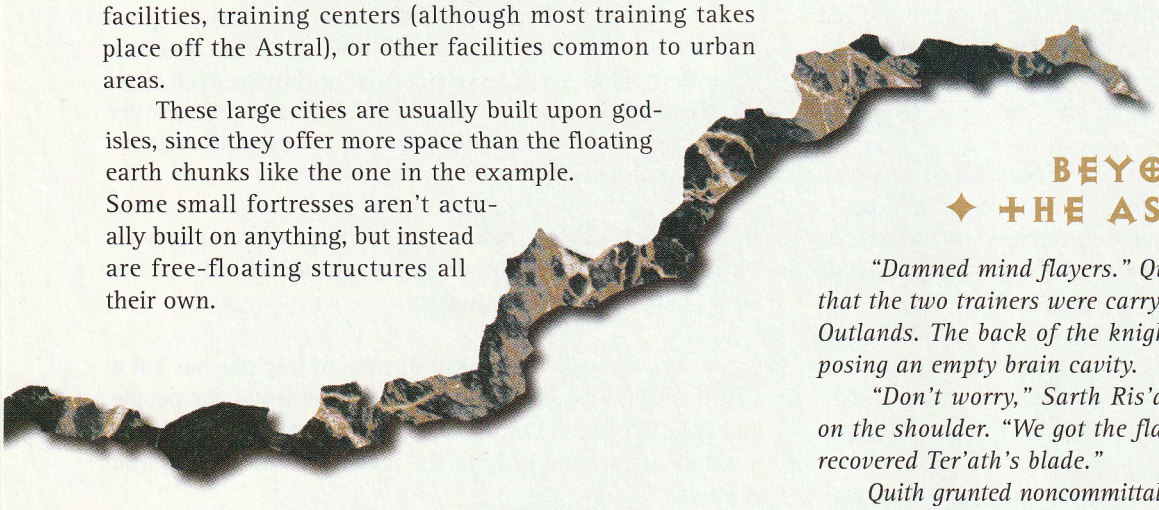
11. Prison. Though it could hold up to 20 prisoners, a typical githyanki prison will usually contain only 2 to 8 captives. These will usually be human or demihuman. Githzerai and illithids are rarely suffered to live, even as prisoners. When needed, the captives found here will be used as slaves.

The prison also contains facilities for extracting information (by means of torture).

LARGER FORTRESSES

Obviously, much larger githyanki fortresses exist that more closely resemble terrestrial cities than the smaller example above does. Only large githyanki citadels have actual marketplaces, astral shipyards, theaters (and similar structures dedicated to the arts), g"lathk farms, libraries and research facilities, training centers (although most training takes place off the Astral), or other facilities common to urban areas.

These large cities are usually built upon godisles, since they offer more space than the floating earth chunks like the one in the example. Some small fortresses aren't actually built on anything, but instead are free-floating structures all their own.



ACTIVITIES ✦ ON THE ASTRAL ✦

Although when they are on another plane githyanki tend to work in groups, on the Astral it's very possible to come upon a lone individual. Not all of them stay in their fortress cities. Many like to explore the infinite expanse of the Silver Void, and some do so solo. Githyanki explorers can be found wandering alone or in small groups on or off an astral ship.

Both to hone their various skills and to stockpile food for planar trips, githyanki enjoy hunting. In the Silver Void, astral whales provide great challenges for the githyanki manning their harpoon-laden ships. Top-shelf, well-armed parties will go after more powerful prey, such as an astral deva, a dhour, a foo creature, or a shedu. No githyanki will ever attack an astral dreadnought – they're too canny for such extreme foolishness.

Githyanki hr'a'cknir study the flows of astral energies throughout the plane. They operate essence mines on a select few dead gods to draw forth some of the strange energies involved with a power's corpse (always careful not to offend the Guardian of the Dead Gods). Hr'a'cknir are always accompanied by retinues of other githyanki as escorts.

Sometimes a githyanki'll spend his or her time on the Astral alone, contemplating some lofty concept, some grand plan, or the energy patterns of the Astral itself. One thing is always true of the githyanki, though – they never think small.

The githyanki hate the Athar and resent their presence on the Astral – not because of their beliefs, but because they are intruders into their space. When it suits them, they wage war on the faction members and its headquarters. Other times, they'll attack some of the other planars that have settled here – particularly those that stray too near githyanki "territory." Fortunately for nongithyanki, most of the githyanki's military might is saved for the githzerai or the illithids.

BEYOND ✦ THE ASTRAL ✦

"Damned mind flayers." Quith looked down at the body that the two trainers were carrying after shifting in from the Outlands. The back of the knight's skull was torn open, exposing an empty brain cavity.

"Don't worry," Sarth Ris'a'n said as he clasped Quith on the shoulder. "We got the flayer that did this . . . and we recovered Ter'ath's blade."

Quith grunted noncommittally. Ris'a'n paid him no attention and moved ahead to the crematorium where the body was being taken to be destroyed. Quith wasn't going to have to go on an off-plane trip for some time, and he was glad. The Astral was his home and he loved its crystal clarity. He looked around him at the silvery, almost reflective atmosphere that surrounded the githyanki citadel where he lived (larger than many, but still no city). The "sky" held tiny pinpricks of light that were nothing but a trick of the plane. The long conduit that throbbed and vibrated just fifty yards or so away was no trick, but the way it faded at both ends into the silvery void at the point where his visual range ended would've seemed strange and alien to someone not acquainted with the ways of the plane.

The githwarrior was torn from his thoughts by the sound of clashing metal. Quith had to get to his practice, or the kith'rak would not be pleased, and he chose not to dwell on what his punishment would be. As he ran off to the practice hall, he glanced toward the mooring. A particularly large astral ship was coming in, and Quith knew that it carried a new knight, probably carrying a whole set of new edicts from the Revered Queen. The last thing Quith wanted was a new set of rules to have to obey. It was so hard to keep it all straight. He'd read about other races on other planes, and he knew that many (perhaps most) had much more solidified and rigid laws to deal with – he couldn't imagine having such fetters upon his life.

Nevertheless, the new knight would be bringing changes, that was certain. Life was hard, Quith thought, but it was never stagnant.

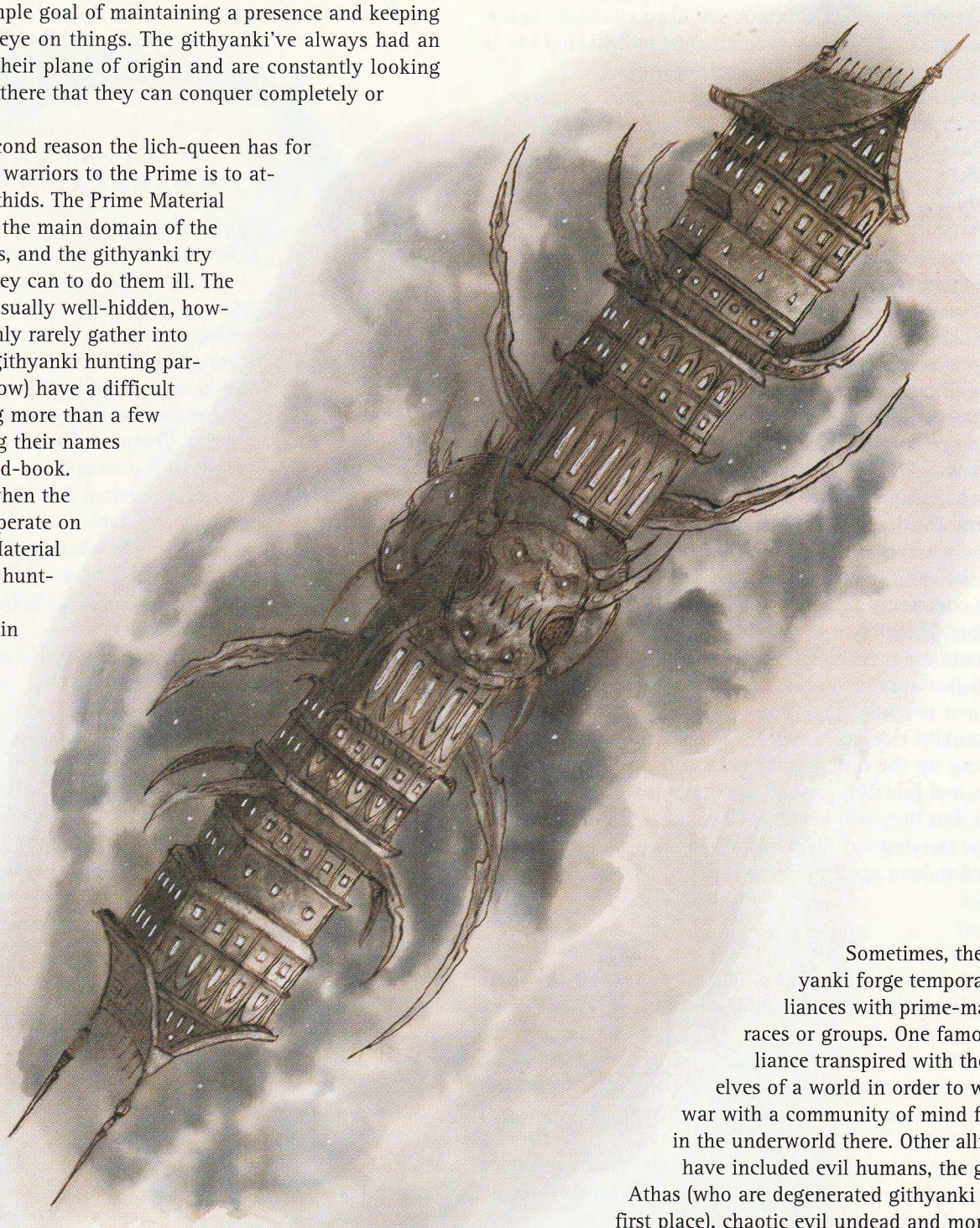
Although the vast majority of the githyanki dwell on the Astral Plane, some've left to explore, wander, or even conquer. Most of these individuals still adhere to the structure of the githyanki society and outlook.

GITHYANKI ON THE PRIME

The most common place for the githyanki to be found outside the Astral is on the Prime. More times than not, these githyanki're there under direct orders of the lich-queen, although occasionally independent interests send troops there as well. The lich-queen has two reasons for sending githyanki to the Prime. The first is to establish bases there, with the simple goal of maintaining a presence and keeping a watchful eye on things. The githyanki've always had an interest in their plane of origin and are constantly looking for a world there that they can conquer completely or in part.

The second reason the lich-queen has for dispatching warriors to the Prime is to attack the illithids. The Prime Material Plane's still the main domain of the mind flayers, and the githyanki try whatever they can to do them ill. The illithids're usually well-hidden, however, and only rarely gather into groups, so githyanki hunting parties (see below) have a difficult time finding more than a few and entering their names into the dead-book.

Even when the githyanki operate on the Prime Material and are not hunting illithids, they maintain an extreme wariness. The leaders insist on continuous battle-readiness for all warriors. The Prime's hostile territory in their eyes, even if no one is aware of their presence. Most primes don't even know a githyanki when they see one, but the githyanki don't realize that and avoid contact unless they are making a raid.



Sometimes, the githyanki forge temporary alliances with prime-material races or groups. One famous alliance transpired with the dark elves of a world in order to wage a war with a community of mind flayers in the underworld there. Other alliances have included evil humans, the gith of Athas (who are degenerated githyanki in the first place), chaotic evil undead and monsters, and various other non-native invaders like tanar'ri and yugoloths.

SODDING 'LITHIDS DON'T EVEN TASTE GOOD.

— RECH, GITHWARRIOR

Further, the pact that was forged between Tiamat and Gith aeons ago still holds true, and so githyanki on the Prime always have red dragon allies if they want them. The dragons're simply there waiting when the githyanki arrive, alerted magically ahead of time and compelled to work with the planar visitors. The dragons vary in age, but normally it's the younger members of the species that are forced to heed the call. Young, young adult, and adult dragons are those commonly found in the company of the githyanki warriors. The githyanki respect these powerful friends and generally use them as efficiently as possible, utilizing their flight, fear aura, and breath weapons in offensive actions, and their toughness and sheer mass in defense. Four to six githyanki'll ride the monsters into battle when possible, backing up the dragon's attacks with missile weapons, spells, and psionics. 'Course, the dragons won't fight to the death, but they will aid the githyanki to the best of their ability, carrying out the terms of the magically forged pact created so long ago by their mistress.

OTHER PLANES

Even though they have the ability to *plane shift* anywhere they please, the githyanki avoid most of the Outer Planes, too wary of the dangers and the natives to explore. Only the Lower Planes're even occasionally visited by the githyanki, and then only covertly. They trade and deal with the tanar'ri (and less frequently the yugoloths) but're rightfully wary of these fiends.

Githyanki parties can sometimes be found wandering the Inner Planes, looking for a magical item or ingredient. At one time there were permanent githyanki fortresses on the plane of Fire and the plane of Smoke, but neither's currently occupied.

GITHYANKI AND THE FACTIONS

Some githyanki have joined factions. Those that call kip in Sigil, even for a short time, usually name a faction as their own. Most frequently, githyanki join the Bleak Cabal, the Doomguard, the Dustmen, or the Free League. They avoid the Athar (they hate them because of their threatening proximity on the Astral), the Xaositects (they have a githzerai factol), the Society of Sensation, and all of the lawful factions.

GITHYANKI/ GITHZERAI WARFARE

Quith had never been in the City of Doors before, but he'd heard about how horrible it was. He'd never imagined the true "dark" of it, as they said here. The worst thing happened when he stumbled into that candlemaker's shop and saw him.

There he was, standing behind a table dipping wicks into hot wax so smugly — like he owned the place. (Revered Queen, perhaps he did . . . what kind of place would allow such a thing?)

Githzerai. Follower of the traitor, Zerthimon. Slayer of children and perverter of their noble race. Right there, in front of him making candles. The abomination looked up from his work and saw Quith. He-who-should-not-be flinched visibly, probably from fear of a Vindicating Son of Gith, Quith thought.

He spoke, his words like worms crawling across Quith's flesh. "Need something?"

Quith thought about drawing his sword and severing the offal-eater's head for saying such vile hateful things, but he realized that the whole thing was probably an elaborate trap set for him. Hordes of githzerai might be waiting for him in the back of the shop. He had to think quickly.

"Ah, no. I, uh . . . Sorry. Wrong shop."

Making good his escape, Quith breathed a sigh of relief. He thought for a moment he heard the betrayer of Gith sigh similarly as he left, but he realized that he must be mistaken. No Zerth lover would react as a true Son of Gith did. Looking around the busy street, he realized he'd have to try to remember this place.

Perhaps he could convince his sarth to allow him to lead the warriors back here and raze the place. At the very least perhaps a warlock or gish could boil the blood in his foul heart.

Because of the number of githzerai that have taken up residence in various places on the Outer Planes (particularly Sigil), the githyanki are careful to remain fairly anonymous when "abroad" in small numbers. Though the racial hatred of the two runs deep, they'll not blindly attack one another

if there's obvious music to pay. For example, neither side is so stupid that they'll attack each other outright if the odds are obviously against them. Further, the Lady of Pain (or the threat of her presence), as well as the Harmonium, keep Sigil from becoming a githyanki/githzerai battleground. The githzerai and githyanki will not ever deal with each other in any affable capacity, however – at best, they ignore each other.

When one side or the other looks to make an actual assault against their enemies, they carry the battle straight into enemy territory. The githyanki almost yearly stage a campaign into Limbo to attack and waylay githzerai caravans and travelers. An attack against one of the fortress cities there has never been successful, so such assaults and sieges're virtually never attempted today.

Surprisingly, the githzerai're more daring with their attacks. Assaults onto the Astral occur much more infrequently, but when they do attack, they strike at githyanki strongholds and major cities. Great loss of life is incurred in the battles, but they are rarely conclusive.

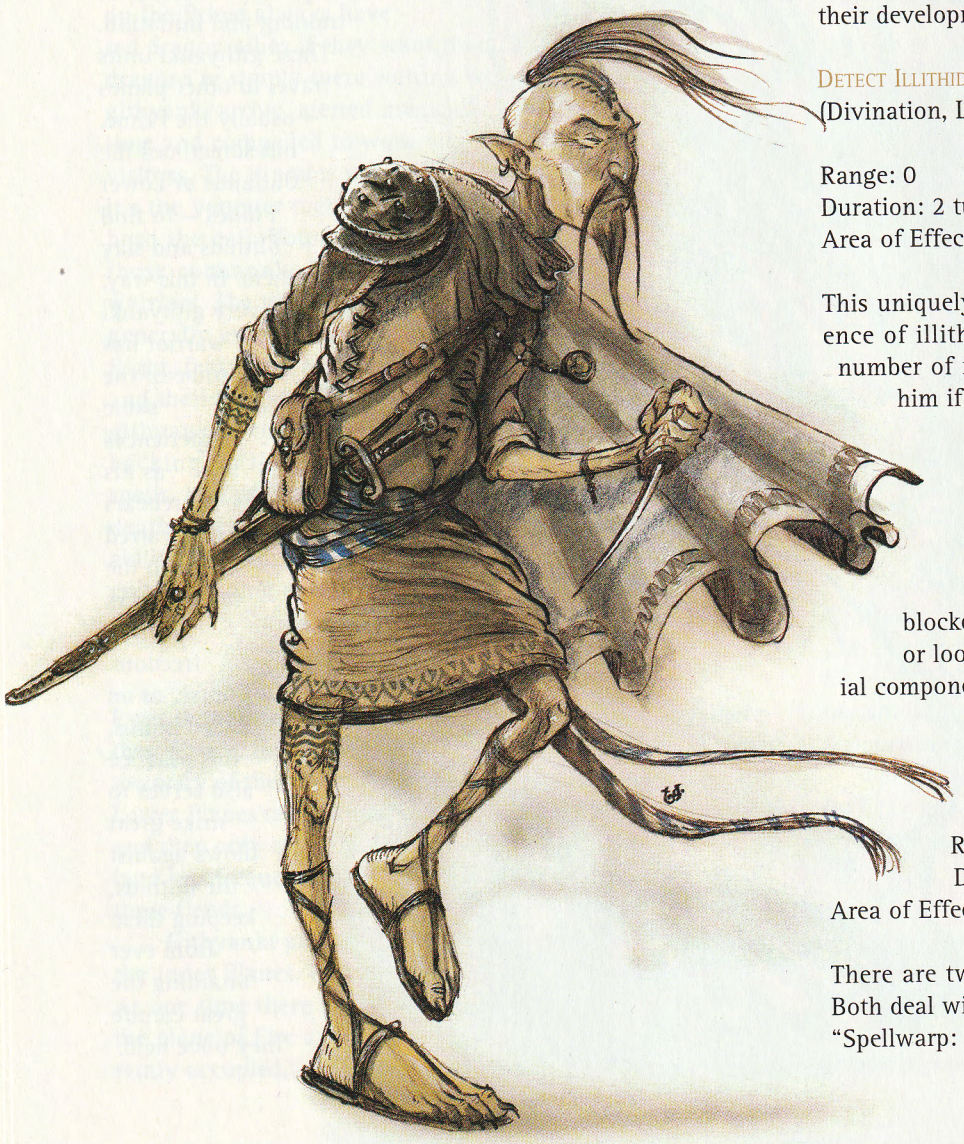
ILLITHID HUNTERS

Every githwarrior, as well as most warlocks and gish, must serve time in an illithid hunting party as a means of training and initiation. These githyanki units travel to other planes – usually the Prime, but sometimes the Outlands or Lower Planes – to find illithids and slay them. In this way, every githyanki warrior has some of the same experiences as his forebears who warred with the mind flayers for their freedom. 'Course, as an added bonus, this practice also serves to strike great blows against the illithids, keeping them from ever attaining the great empire they once held.

Illithid hunting parties're usually made up of a knight of at least 7th level, a warlock of at least 5th level or a gish of at least 4th/4th level, and three to nine githwarriors or warlocks of 1st to 3rd level. Larger groups are also known (especially when a lair of multiple mind flayers has been detected), up to twice the size with the leaders being at least two levels higher. On the Prime, they'll be accompanied by one or two red dragons.

These hunting parties know illithid tactics, habits, and powers very well. They're aware of mind flayer servants such as intellect devourers and grimlocks. In short, they're efficient and deadly. Despite their usual contempt for other races, the illithids truly fear these hunters, doing what they can to conceal and protect themselves from them.

The githzerai have similar hunting groups, called *rrakkma* bands. Despite their similar missions, the rrakkma and the githyanki hunters never ally, and as often as not they come to blows if they encounter one another. If possible, illithids use this sort of hatred to their advantage, trying to lure these groups into confrontation.



✦ GITHYANKI MAGIC ✦

Magic is, in all senses of the word, commonplace in githyanki society. Their race is more magical to begin with than, say, humans, and so far more wizards (and of course, gish and mlar) exist in githyanki communities than in communities of most other races. Moreover, magic has no particular mystique about it for the githyanki. It is just another tool or weapon to train and become proficient with. Githyanki respect its power, but they also respect the combat abilities of a well-trained knight and his *silver sword*.

SPELLS

It'll come as no surprise to anyone that the githyanki, a powerfully magical race, have developed a few spells of their own to deal with their new environment, as well as their outlook and philosophy.

The githyanki created the following wizard spells for their own purposes, but most have fallen into the hands of nongithyanki since their development.

Detect Illithid
(Divination, Level 1)

Range: 0
Duration: 2 turns/level
Area of Effect: 100′ radius
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1
Saving Throw: None

This uniquely githyanki spell alerts the caster to the presence of illithids within 100 feet of his person. The exact number of mind flayers and their positions are known to him if they are within the radius.

This spell was developed to aid illithid-hunting githyanki as they navigate the underground tunnels where the mind flayers make their lairs. Although its area of effect is small, its duration makes it a worthwhile spell. However, this spell is blocked by one foot of solid stone, one yard of wood or loose earth, or one inch of solid metal. The material component is a bit of illithid flesh or bone.

Probe Spellshadow
(Divination, Level 3)

Range: Special
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: Special
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 3
Saving Throw: None

There are two uses of this spell, *detection* and *dissection*. Both deal with spellshadows, described in the chapter called "Spellwarp: Astral Magic."

The *detection* ability leads the caster, upon finishing the spell, to the location on the Astral Plane of a particular spellshadow known to the wizard. For the spellshadow to be "known," the caster must be aware of the original caster of the spell that created the shadow, or the exact place and time when such a spell was cast. The spell lasts until the wizard arrives at the spot, although if he pauses for more than an hour while traveling to the location or if he stops more than ten hours away from the location, the *probe spellshadow* spell is ruined.

Once at the site, the wizard can use the proficiency read spellshadow to glean information from the shadow, or he can cast *probe spellshadow* again to *dissect* the shadow, giving him a chance to learn the spell (see the Intelligence table in the *PHB* for the percentage chance to learn the spell) and add it to his repertoire. This dissection gives the wizard all the basics of the spell, but he must then meditate on these factors for a week per level of the spell before he can put them all together well enough to write the spell in his spell book. Obviously, only wizard spells (not including those from opposition schools or above the wizard's spell level) can be learned by the wizard, although any spell can be detected and read.

In any event, a spellshadow fades 1d4 hours after it has been disturbed – that is, probed or read in any way (even just detecting it will cause it to fade, although the shadow doesn't fade until 1d4 hours after the spell completely ends).

Spellshadows were almost certainly discovered by the githyanki, who developed this spell. Nevertheless, the information has leaked out to a few bloods on the planes. Only one in a thousand spellcasters knows the dark of them, though, so the knowledge is very rare, and therefore, very valuable.

Out of Time's Grip
(Alteration, Level 4)

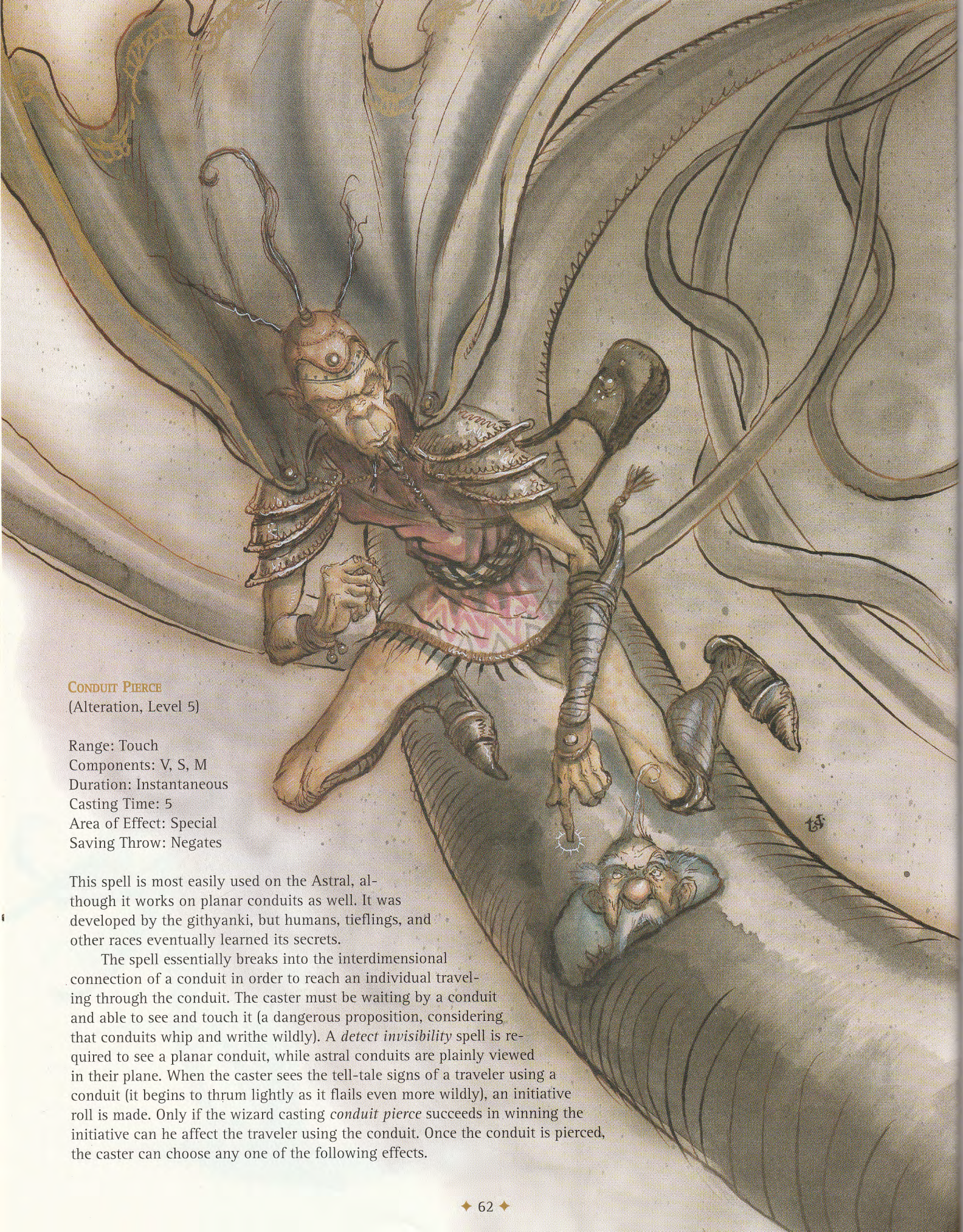
Range: Touch
Duration: 1 hour/level
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 4
Saving Throw: None

As discussed in the first chapter, time does not actually pass on the Astral Plane, but it catches up with an individual once she leaves. This spell was created by the githyanki to enable them to leave the Astral for short periods without feeling the effects of the time that they've cheated. For the duration of the spell, the recipient can operate freely on any plane without worrying about retroactive aging for the time she spent on the Astral. If she stays off the Astral longer than the duration, time immediately catches up with her and she instantly ages all the time that she spent on the Astral, as normal. A successful casting of *dispel magic* will cause the spell's effect to stop.

The Clutches of Time
(Alteration, Level 5)

Range: Touch
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 5
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell is intended to be cast on the Astral, although it would affect an individual under the effects of *out of time's grip*. Essentially, it summons just enough temporal energy from another plane to have time's effects catch up with a recipient who has been "cheating" time by staying on the Astral Plane. For some, this spell will be a minor hindrance, but for those who've spent many years, decades or even centuries there, this spell can be instantly lethal.



Conduit Pierce
(Alteration, Level 5)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell is most easily used on the Astral, although it works on planar conduits as well. It was developed by the githyanki, but humans, tieflings, and other races eventually learned its secrets.

The spell essentially breaks into the interdimensional connection of a conduit in order to reach an individual traveling through the conduit. The caster must be waiting by a conduit and able to see and touch it (a dangerous proposition, considering that conduits whip and writhe wildly). A *detect invisibility* spell is required to see a planar conduit, while astral conduits are plainly viewed in their plane. When the caster sees the tell-tale signs of a traveler using a conduit (it begins to thrum lightly as it flails even more wildly), an initiative roll is made. Only if the wizard casting *conduit pierce* succeeds in winning the initiative can he affect the traveler using the conduit. Once the conduit is pierced, the caster can choose any one of the following effects.

- Spell Theft. If the traveler is a wizard, the caster can steal any one of her spells. The spell is chosen by the caster, and he gains it as though he has memorized the spell himself, even if it would exceed his normal allotted number of spells. The caster must be of an appropriate level (and school, if specialized) to cast the spell, however. The traveler loses the spell as though she cast it and may not even realize what happened. A saving throw is allowed to see if the traveler can resist the effect of the spell, and an Intelligence check at a –3 penalty is required to ascertain what happened during transit.
- Life Theft. This effect drains the traveler of 2d10 hit points and transfers them to the caster in a necromantic fashion. These hit points can be used only to heal the caster, replacing lost hit points. It is impossible for the caster to reach a hit point total higher than his maximum through the use of this spell. Again, the traveler gains a saving throw to resist the effect and an Intelligence check at a –3 penalty to correctly determine what happened.
- Conduit Breach. This is the most dramatic use of the *conduit pierce* spell. The caster uses the spell to tear a temporary hole in the conduit, bringing the traveler to the point where the caster is rather than her original destination at the terminus of the conduit. Travelers failing their saving throws arrive slightly disoriented (–2 penalty to surprise), but completely capable of taking out their displeasure upon the caster. Wizards attempting to make such a brazen abduction should be prepared. The breach in the conduit closes instantaneously, so there is no chance that the traveler can return. Travelers who make their saving throws arrive at the end of the conduit normally and can attempt an Intelligence check at a –3 penalty to recognize what almost happened to them.

It is important to remember that the traveler cannot act while in a conduit. For the traveler, everything happens too quickly to respond. Even if she realizes what happened, it will not be until her journey is complete.

Many regard this spell to be wholly evil in its application and refuse to use it. The material component is a knife made of silver, worth at least 100 gp, which the caster must use to physically pierce the conduit. When the knife strikes the surface of the conduit, the spell activates and consumes the knife.

MAGICAL ITEMS

"Githyanki smiths 'n craftsmens're known all over the planes, an' their magical items're second ta none. Never'less, most bloods ain't goin' ta try'n get any of those items 'cause they'll get their brain-boxes bashed in wit' one o' dem silver chivs. Me? I knows how ta get such things, an' I'll sell 'em to ya – but fer a hefty jink. How do I do it? I bashes them's brain-boxes 'fore they bash mine. Ain't easy – that's why I want a healthy bit o' jinkalink. Get me?"

– Thev Nevau, a planar trader with a crude, but actually realistic approach and outlook

The githyanki create magical items of all types. Enchanted weapons and objects (but especially weapons) are more common among these folk than among many other races. They are sold by their creators or given as rewards from superiors. Most githyanki do not like to see their items fall into the hands of other races (in particular, the unique items listed below – especially the *silver swords*), but a few will conduct trade with other planars if they stand to profit from the deal.

About one in four of all githyanki items are created in whole or in part by hr'a'cknir, meaning that in addition to or instead of normal enchantments, they are infused with astral energies. This means that the item functions only on the Astral Plane.

Some creations unique to the githyanki include the following items:

Attraction Rug. This item is created by mlar and hr'a'cknir working together. Since the hr'a'cknir infuse it with astral energies, it functions only on the Astral. In appearance, it's a thin carpet of finely woven threads in abstract patterns. In effect, the threads create a gravitylike attraction on one side, so that when placed on a flat surface, those standing on it or within an area of 15 feet above it feel as though they are on a standard prime-material world (or similar setting with gravity).

Attraction rugs are found in the personal homes and shops of githyanki who have a preference for such environments. Most are 10 feet by 15 feet in size, but they can be much larger.

Attraction Sphere. Working on the same principle (and utilizing the same hr'a'cknir astral energies), this tiny metal sphere can be placed within a floating rock isle to give it a gravitylike attraction. Since isles differ in size and shape, a hr'a'cknir must create each *attraction sphere* with a specific isle in mind.

Psychic Armor. Ornately carved in the githyanki tradition, this plate mail armor protects the wearer from the physical effects of the psychic wind. That is, the wind will not throw the wearer off-course in his astral travels in any way or send him through a color pool against his will. This armor usually has a magical bonus of +1 or, rarely, +2.

Psychic Helm. Another baroque example of githyanki magic, this helmet protects the wearer from the mental effects (harmful and beneficial) of the dreaded psychic wind.

Silver Sword. The silver sword is an ornate weapon of a silvery metal found only on the corpses of powers. Mlar smiths

forge them most often as two-handed blades, though long swords are not unknown. Aside from their +3 magical bonus, these weapons have a 5% chance per hit to cut the silver cord of an astral traveler. The only defense against this sort of attack is the telepathic devotion *mind bar,* which renders the victim immune to the cord-cutting effect.

Special Silver Swords. Similar in appearance and creation to the *silver sword,* these weapons have a +5 magical bonus and have all the abilities of a *vorpal sword.* In addition, there is no defense against their cord-cutting power.

✦ GITHYANKI PSIONICS ✦

Githyanki are more psionically adept than most races, probably because of long-term exposure to the energies of the Astral Plane. Githyanki nonplayer characters have some sort of psionic talent (that is, they are "wild talents") at least 75% of the time.

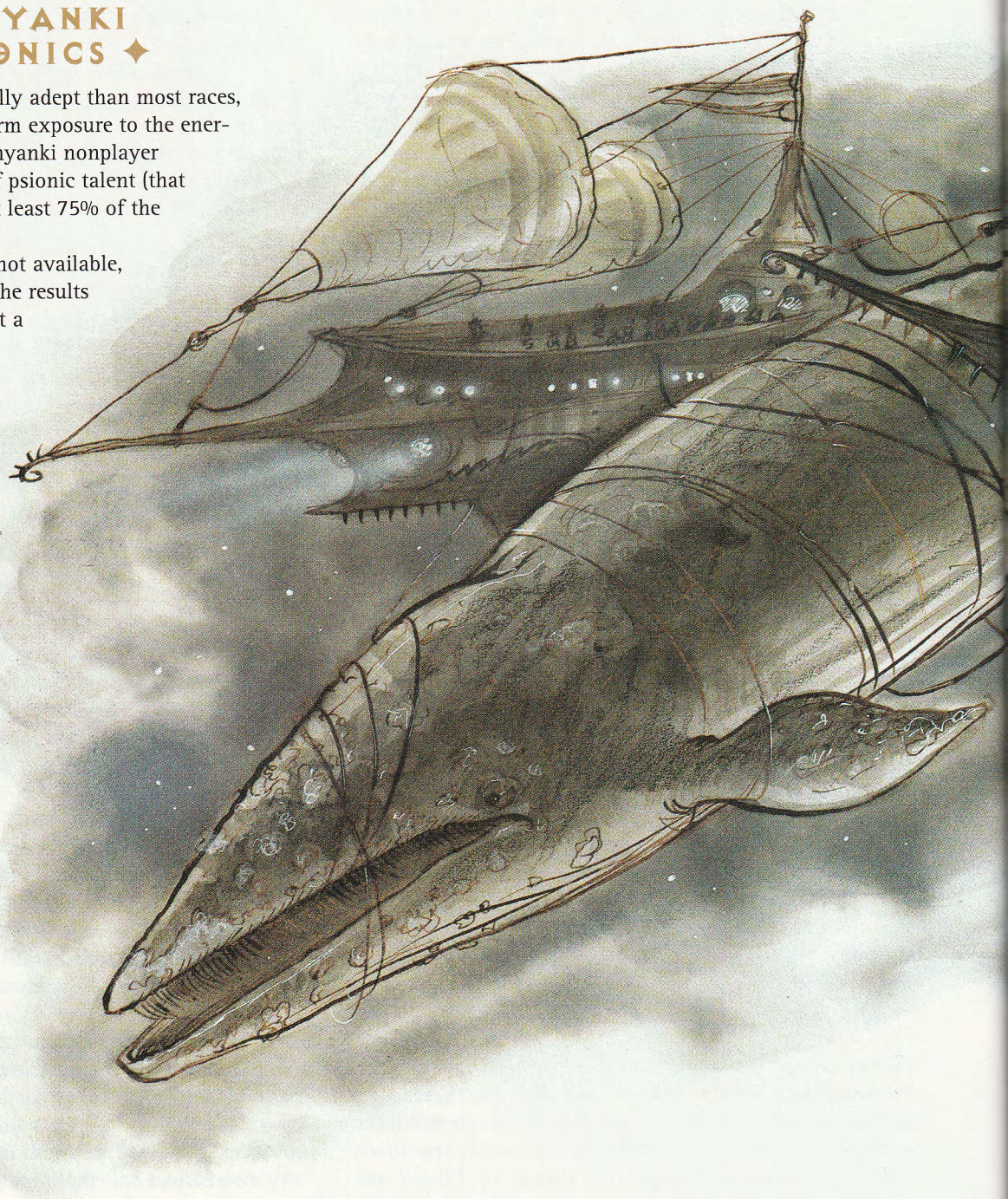
If the psionic rules are not available, roll 1d4 times on Table IV. The results are the spell-like powers that a psionic githyanki has available for use up to three times each day.

TABLE IV: PSIONIC SPELL-LIKE POWERS

01–08	*clairaudience*
09–16	*clairvoyance*
17–22	*telekinesis*
23–25	*animate object*
26–29	*levitation*
30–35	*cure light wounds*
36–40	*teleport*
41–47	*domination*
48–55	*ESP*
56–65	*charm person*
66–75	*charm monster*
76–83	*invisibility*
84–90	*know alignment*
91–95	*comprehend languages*
96–99	*alter self*
00	DM's choice or special

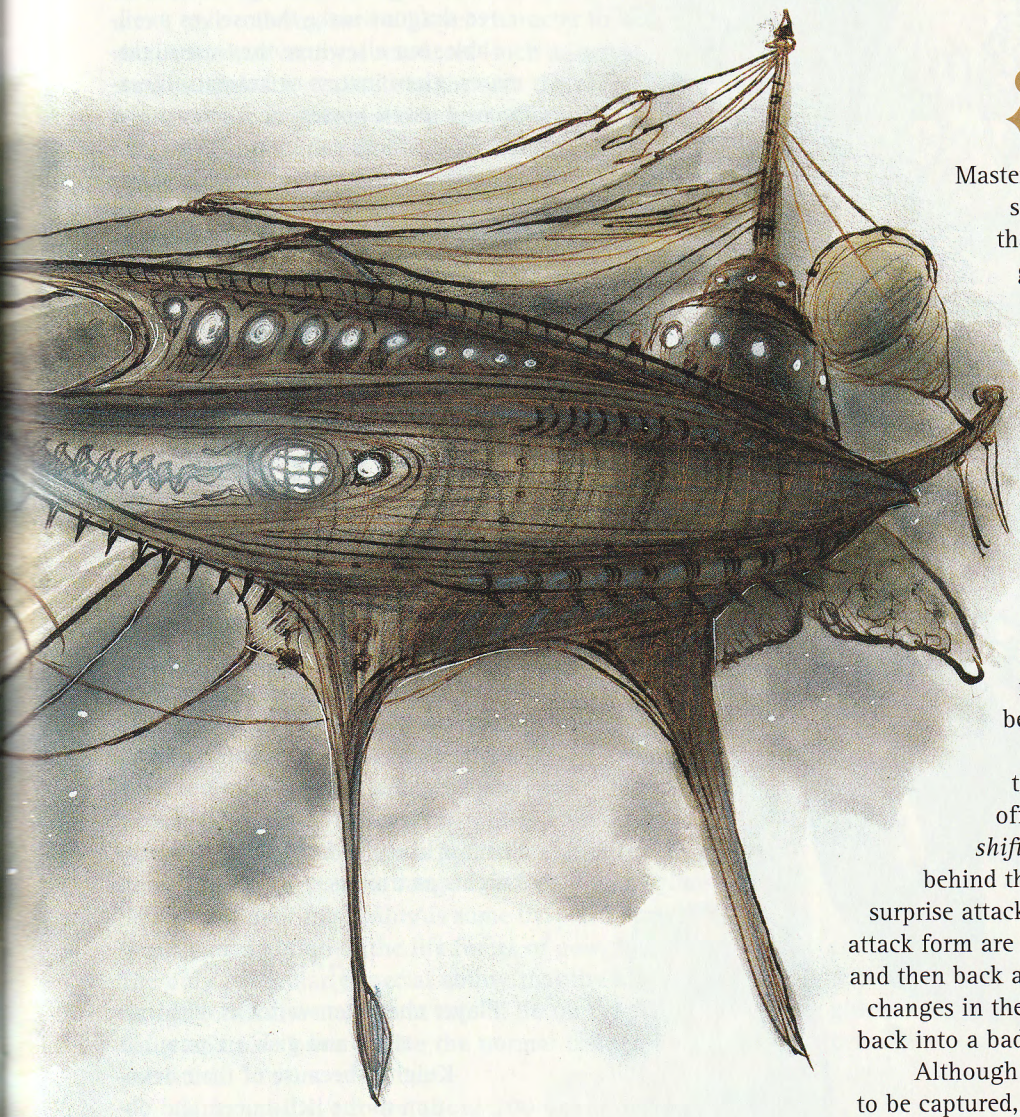
✦ ASTRAL SHIPS ✦

"It wasn't until my third visit to the Silver Void that I saw one of the regal astral whales. A misnamed creature, this behemoth gracefully glided through astral space with a smoothness no paddling water beast could ever hope for. Unfortunately, that was also my first encounter with the githyanki and one of their infamous astral ships. I will say this – the craft was not without its own particular grace and beauty. Horrible but efficient githyanki hunters brought down the whale before I could react. They ignored me as they tore into its flesh, shredding it into slabs to be thrown onto



the deck. As I watched, I saw spells, psionics, and keen blades working in a precision unlike any I had ever seen before. Like so many other cultures existing in a barren wasteland of some sort (although the Astral Plane is more barren than most!), the githyanki took the whole beast, obviously not wanting to waste a bit of skin, meat, or bone. While I remained motionlessly transfixed, the hunters sailed away on their psychic ship like a force of nature, knowing, I am sure, that I posed no more threat to them and their kill than a mouse poses to the thunderstorm."

– Tlemizar the Old, Planewalker



The mlar create the astral ships of the githyanki, using special energies gathered by the hr'a'cknir and various materials collected from other planes. They are difficult to create, requiring years of work. Most communities have access to only a handful.

The rules governing the operation of astral ships are found in the chapter called "Racing Through Nothing: Astral Movement." Though they vary in size from a small dhow to a large galleon, most astral ships are considered to be equivalent to a terrestrial keelboat. These are usually equipped with harpoons for hunting astral whales while larger ships carry ballistae (firing spears or metal shot) and even catapults for assaulting fortifications.

GITHYANKI ✦ TACTICS ✦

Masters of combat, both on a small and a large scale, the githyanki have particular tactics that they use when fighting. Canny bashers get to know these battle methods, so they know what to expect when they encounter the githyanki.

ON THE ASTRAL

If the githyanki are encountered on their "home" plane, they make extremely dangerous opponents. Githwarriors make full use of their enhanced movement capabilities, swarming in with blinding speed to attack, and then backing away from their foes before any significant retaliation can be waged.

If his foes counter this tactic somehow, the *plane shift* ability of the githyanki can offer a variation on the same idea. By *plane shifting* to another plane and then back again behind the enemy, the githyanki launches efficient surprise attacks again and again. The limitations of this attack form are that it takes two full rounds to shift away and then back again, and that the githyanki's unaware of changes in the battle while he's away, and risks shifting back into a bad position.

Although they will almost never allow themselves to be captured, they will not hesitate to withdraw from a battle that goes against them. Githyanki do not have an overblown sense of honor. When fighting, they will attempt to win by any means and survive at any cost. Githyanki are intelligent fighters, interested in success more than glory.

Githwarriors will always be trained in the astral combat proficiency detailed in the chapter called "Mind Over Matter: Proficiencies", as well as some of the others presented there (DM's discretion).

ELSEWHERE

With a normal movement rate, githyanki tactics change. While still fierce in their fighting, the warriors conduct themselves more cautiously. Many githyanki feel that death off the Silver Void is a far worse fate than being slain on their home plane.

Githyanki, particularly knights, like to go into battle mounted, if possible. On the Prime Material Plane, red dragons make themselves available, but elsewhere they use nightmares, giant insects or animals, hieracosphinxes, horses, or whatever else the warlocks can charm. When not mounted, the githyanki attempt to use the *plane shift* tactic that they use on the Astral to make surprise attacks and quick escapes.

GITHYANKI AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

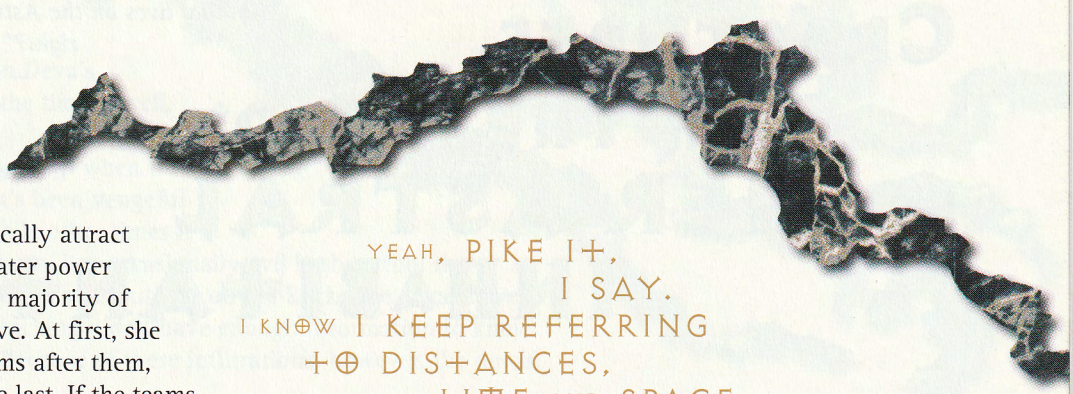
As an option, a Dungeon Master can choose to allow githyanki as a player character race. Because githyanki are evil in alignment, it's suggested that such player characters are outcasts, renegades, or pariahs who have turned from their race's baser nature. These nonevil githyanki would retain no ties to their culture, and in fact would most likely be hunted by githyanki knights as traitors.

CLASS

Player character warlocks, githwarriors, and gish are possible. Knights, because of their devotion to the lich-queen and obvious dark nature, can't be player characters. Mlar, g"lathk, and hr'a'cknir wouldn't make good adventurers, so they're also not allowed to be played as player characters.

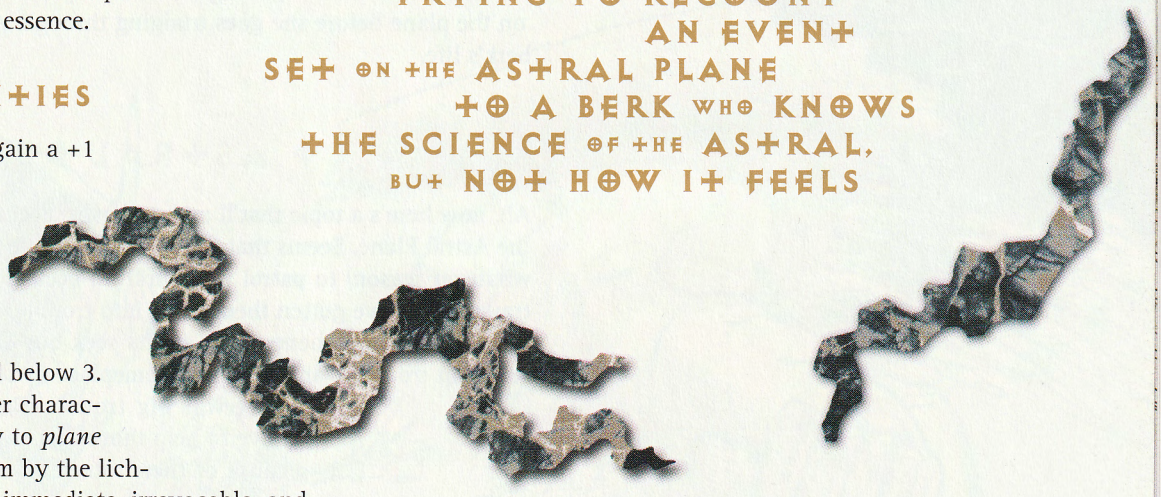
LEVEL LIMITS

Although no githyanki ever rises above 11th level, this is more a fact of the lich-queen's intervention than racial limitations. Even outcast (player character) githyanki that rise to 11th level automatically attract her attention. Attempts to rise to greater power draw down her wrath, a fate the vast majority of 11th-level characters could not survive. At first, she sends several waves of githyanki teams after them, each one larger and stronger than the last. If the teams aren't able to bring such a player character to her, she uses whatever local resources (such as assassins) as might be available in the area the player character is currently working in, and sends knights, githwarriors, and warlocks to coordinate the retrieval. The lich-queen is a persistent creature, so she won't give up on this matter until she has the offender. Of course, player character githyanki have the option of remaining at 11th level and gaining no further experience points, which appeases the evil queen and keeps her from devouring their life essence.



YEAH, PIKE IT,
I SAY.
I KNOW I KEEP REFERRING
TO DISTANCES,
TIME AND SPACE,
AND ALL THAT,
WHILE NONE OF THESE TERMS
FIT THE ASTRAL.
YEAH, I KNOW
IT'S NOT REALLY EVEN A PLANE.
BUT WHAT'S A BASHER
SUPPOSED TO DO?

— DEVBON THE KEEL,
TRYING TO RECOUNT
AN EVENT
SET ON THE ASTRAL PLANE
TO A BERK WHO KNOWS
THE SCIENCE OF THE ASTRAL,
BUT NOT HOW IT FEELS



RACIAL ABILITIES

Githyanki player characters gain a +1 bonus to their Dexterity and Intelligence scores, but they must subtract a –1 penalty from their Wisdom and Charisma ability scores. These modifications can take scores above 18 and below 3.

Because githyanki player characters are outcasts, their ability to *plane shift* is taken away from them by the lich-queen. This ability of hers is immediate, irrevocable, and unavoidable. There is no range involved. Some believe that her control over this ability is some by-product of her continual consumption of the life forces of powerful githyanki. The only particularly special ability that the player character has left is the movement rate of 96 on the Astral Plane. Githyanki also have double the normal chance for psionic potential.

Githyanki live to be about 200 years old, but since nothing ages on the Astral, only those that spend great amounts of time away from home (like player characters) need ever worry about growing old and dying.

As mentioned above, githzerai reactions to githyanki are almost always going to be bad. This is true for outcast githyanki as well. Most other folks are prejudiced against them also. Reaction adjustments for good-aligned nonplayer characters have a –2 penalty and neutral nonplayer characters make their check with a –1 penalty, while those for githzerai of any alignment are made with an additional –8 penalty.

EQUIPMENT

Githyanki player characters are not granted automatic magical items as they gain levels as githyanki nonplayer characters are. Without ties to the society, there is no one to grant the weapons to them. Fact is, if a player character githyanki somehow got his hands on a *silver sword*, he'd be hunted by knights until it was recovered and he was slain.

Creatures of the Void: Other Astral Inhabitants

"Nothing lives on the Astral, right?"
– unnamed Clueless

It's true that nothing's native to the Astral. Native, in this case, means that it has lived there since the dawn of time. Plenty of creatures live there now, but they are not really *of* the Astral. The point here is the same one stated earlier – nothing was ever supposed to come to the plane. Nothing was supposed to live in the multiversal scaffolding that is the Astral. That's all blown to Baator now, though, and a body should be aware of what calls kip on the plane before she goes trudging through. A little knowledge can save a berk's life.

✦ Astral Deva ✦

Ah, now here's a topic that'll make a basher feel a little better about exploring the Astral Plane. Seems that these aasimon have taken it upon themselves (for whatever reason) to patrol the Astral on occasion and help out good-aligned travelers who've gotten themselves into trouble.

These kindly, benevolent spirits seek out Clueless who've gotten themselves in trouble wandering into someplace or something that they didn't realize was big trouble. But astral devas occasionally have to help those that should know better as well. Because of their interference in astral affairs, the devas have earned the undying hatred of the githyanki. As often as not, it is they whom the devas have to save folks from.

WELCOME TO DEVA'S ROCK. HERE, LET ME HELP YOU WITH THAT.
— GIRRESTIAN, AN ASTRAL DEVA

How they decide whom to help is unknown. It seems, though, that those individuals working directly for a good power have a better chance of being watched over by a deva while they're on the Astral. The plane's infinitely big, though, and they can't help everyone.

There's a place called Deva's Rock on the Astral that is just what it sounds like: a floating island used as a case for devas passing through. The devas have a golden castle built upon the island, with a tiny village surrounding it with friendly taverns and safe places to rest. The problem is, the only bloods that find it are the ones that the devas wish to find it. Most of the lucky bashers were brought there by a deva guide convinced of their true need for a haven.

Though a body doesn't need to eat or drink on the Astral, he'll find warm food and good bub on Deva's Rock. It's calm, quiet, and restful all the time – well, most of the time.

Chant is that there've been a few times when the devas have been peeled. Sometimes it's been vengeful githyanki out to destroy the place, while other times it's just mischievous tanar'ri spreading chaos, but occasionally evil bashers fool the devas and get access to the place. Then, it's all-out war on the Rock. The devas have always won, mostly because those attacking didn't have enough information to know what to expect when they got there. Because of these infiltrations, however, the devas grow more peery every day.

Astral devas possess fair hair, golden skin, and amber eyes. Most astral devas are stunningly handsome (they have a Charisma of 20), stand about seven feet tall, and have large, feathery wings that fan out from their shoulders in a graceful manner. They carry a macelike weapon that provides them with a +3 bonus (3d6 points of damage). For further information, reference the astral deva in the PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® *Appendix.*

✦ ASTRAL DRAGON ✦

The color of the space around me began to change. Before I knew it, the Silver Void was gone, or so it seemed. Everything was now a pale lavender. Had I passed through a color pool without realizing it? Doubtful. I was still propelled by force of will alone.

Ahead of me, I saw what appeared to be a large, dark gemstone. As I got closer I realized that it was much larger and more distant than I had originally envisioned. It was no mere gem, but an entire citadel made of some black crystalline substance. It was beautiful – as beautiful as the creature who emerged from it was terrifying. A long, graceful neck, a powerful body, and huge fleshy wings identified it at once to be . . . a dragon! But a dragon unlike any I'd seen before.

– From the journals of Tirac Spur, planewalker

The Prime, it has been said, teems with dragons – giving folks just one more reason not to go there. While that's true, out on the planes there's more than a handful of dragons too. Astral dragons are said to have ties to the prime-material world called Krynn, a place so backward that they think all planes beyond their own are the Abyss. If a body sees a tome that places the astral dragon in the Abyss, keep that in mind. Astral dragons, as any leatherhead could figure, live on the Astral.

These immortal creatures are just short of demipowers on a scale measuring might. As dragons go, they're normally not very big – only about five feet long – but they instantly regenerate any wound. Once two of the beasts mate, however, a body's got to show them some respect. They grow to a length of 50 feet and become practically impervious to harm. The interesting thing is, a mated pair is joined by a long chain that keeps them within 100 feet of each other. Chant is, some neutral power (or powers) blesses the union of these golden dragons by giving them the chain as a symbol of their eternal devotion to each other. The type of chain differs for each mated pair. Furthermore, when the dragons receive the chain, they also receive the ability to protect their eternal love by growing and gaining extra powers. The dragons don't look upon the chain as a hindrance, but as a blessing. Go figure.

Astral dragons live in huge palaces of black crystal once they have mated (they wander the Astral, and the planes in general – dipping in and out of color pools – before mating). These beasts are so powerful that the presence of one of their citadels reforms the astral space around it, changing the color and sometimes even the physical laws. They are truly masters of these tiny realms, and only a real addle-cove would cross one in its home.

Once mated, they don't seem to like to leave their citadels, and virtually never leave the Astral Plane. For this reason, they send out tiny kodragons (see below) to gather information for them throughout the multiverse. They don't like to deal with other dragons (except kodragons), and are truly neutral in outlook in every respect. They wield powerful magic – but a smart cutter's going to remember that they don't like to be disturbed.

Astral Dragon: AC 5 [–5]; MV 6, Fl 18 (C) [15, Fl 48 (B)]; HD 3 [35]; THAC0 17 [5]; #AT 3 [6]; Dmg 1d4/1d4/2d6 (claw/claw/bite) [3d20 (×4)/1d100 (×2)]; SA nil [spells as a 30th-level cleric, radiate *fear* in a 50′ radius with a –4 penalty to save, +12 bonus to attack and damage rolls]; SD instantly regenerates from any wound; MR nil [95%]; SZ M (5′ long) [G (50′ long each)]; ML average (12) [fanatic (17)]; Int genius (17–18) [godlike (21)]; AL N; XP 420 [40,000].

Notes: Numbers in brackets are for both members of a mated pair. Though they regenerate from any wound, a *wish*, *power word kill*, or similar spell can slay them.

✦ ASTRAL DREADNOUGHT ✦

All right, here's the chant – avoid astral dreadnoughts.

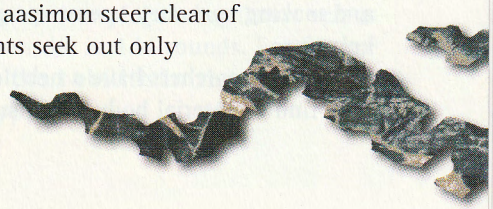
Not enough information? Okay, berk, but remember – just avoid them and leave it at that.

Astral dreadnoughts might be one of the only native astral creatures, but even that is suspect. See, the chant is that these creatures are an extension of the Astral itself. This chant is most often repeated by those that believe that the conduits are living creatures, or part of some massive entity. If this is true (and most doubt it), then astral dreadnoughts are also a part of this entity.

One of the reasons that some folks suspect that to be the dark of the dreadnought is that it attacks only those astrally projecting, a practice some think pokes holes in the astral fabric (the color pools). These terrors do sometimes seem to be some sort of "bouncers in the astral tavern," as it were. Chant is that some berks have seen a dreadnought pass through a psychic windstorm without being affected, leading a body to believe that they know something about the Astral that most folks don't – or they are linked with it in some way.

Other folks have an entirely different view on astral dreadnoughts. They believe that these monstrosities are astral projectors themselves, coming in from some nightmarish prime-material world. They do trail a long tail not unlike a silver cord which, when cut, destroys the beast – just like any other berk (except that the dreadnought's cord works a little different – a body *doesn't* need one of the githyanki's special swords to cut it, but it's much harder to sever no matter what weapon is used).

The thing is, nothing is more terrifying on the Astral Plane than an encounter with one of these beasts. Only mated astral dragons are more powerful, and the two never cross paths (besides, the dragons rarely leave their sparkling palaces). Even fiends and aasimon steer clear of them, though dreadnoughts seek out only astrally traveling sods. These huge, semi-



humanoid monsters have gigantic claws that can cut a sod in twain and a maw that'd swallow a pit fiend whole.

Reportedly, the githyanki have made numerous attempts to communicate with these beasts, or failing that, mastering them with spells or psionics. They've hit the blinds every time. What's more, they discovered that those that aren't astrally projecting still shouldn't annoy a dreadnought – it'll tear just about anyone that gets in its way or is barmy enough to provoke it.

Astral dreadnoughts are about 30-feet tall. Their jaws gape open exposing many sharp teeth and they possess huge, pincerlike claws. Their armored carapace has a reddish tone from which one black, malevolent eye stares. Among other special attacks, the astral dreadnought is capable of inflicting 4d8 points of damage with its claws and 2d10 points of damage with its bite. For further information, reference the astral dreadnought in the PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM *Appendix II.*

✦ ASTRAL SEARCHER ✦

"We'd finished off the githyanki. We shoulda been done. But no. Then these spirit things – Veru called 'em astral searchers – started pulling at me. I could tell they wanted ta git me, but I didn't know what for. So I tried ta fight 'em, but how do you fight a creature made of some leatherhead's thoughts that're just laying around on the Astral? (Gods, but I hate that plane!) Veru told me after we'd managed ta get away that they wanted ta take over my body. Can you imagine? They wanted to steal my form and go prancin' off on their merry way. Nice.

"The Astral. Yeah, like I'd go back there again . . ."

– Raest Marin, one time (and one time only) traveler to the Astral

Formed from the very thoughts that leak onto the Astral Plane from elsewhere, these ghostly beings are memories and ideas given life. The problem is, they seek a more conventional life – they want bodies to move around in and hands to grasp things. They don't mind stealing the bodies of others to attain their goal, either.

When the drifting thoughts found on the Astral are exposed to intense feelings or emotions, particularly pain, anger, and hate (such as found in a battle), sometimes the thoughts become aware and seek a body of their own. As if getting into a scuffle on the Astral isn't bad enough, the whole ordeal might stir up a few astral searchers, leaving the victor of the battle in a second struggle – this time to hang on to his own bodily form.

As was mentioned in the chapter about conduits, there is a special type of enlightened searcher that takes it upon itself to watch over the conduit system, protecting conduits and making sure they operate properly. Why this is, no one knows.

Astral searchers have a nebulous humanoid shape until they find a material body. After successfully making a fatal blow (1d6 points of damage per mental blow), an astral searcher acquires the victim's physical abilities and hit points. For further information, reference the astral searcher in the PLANESCAPE *Campaign Setting Monstrous Supplement.*

✦ ASTRAL STREAKER ✦

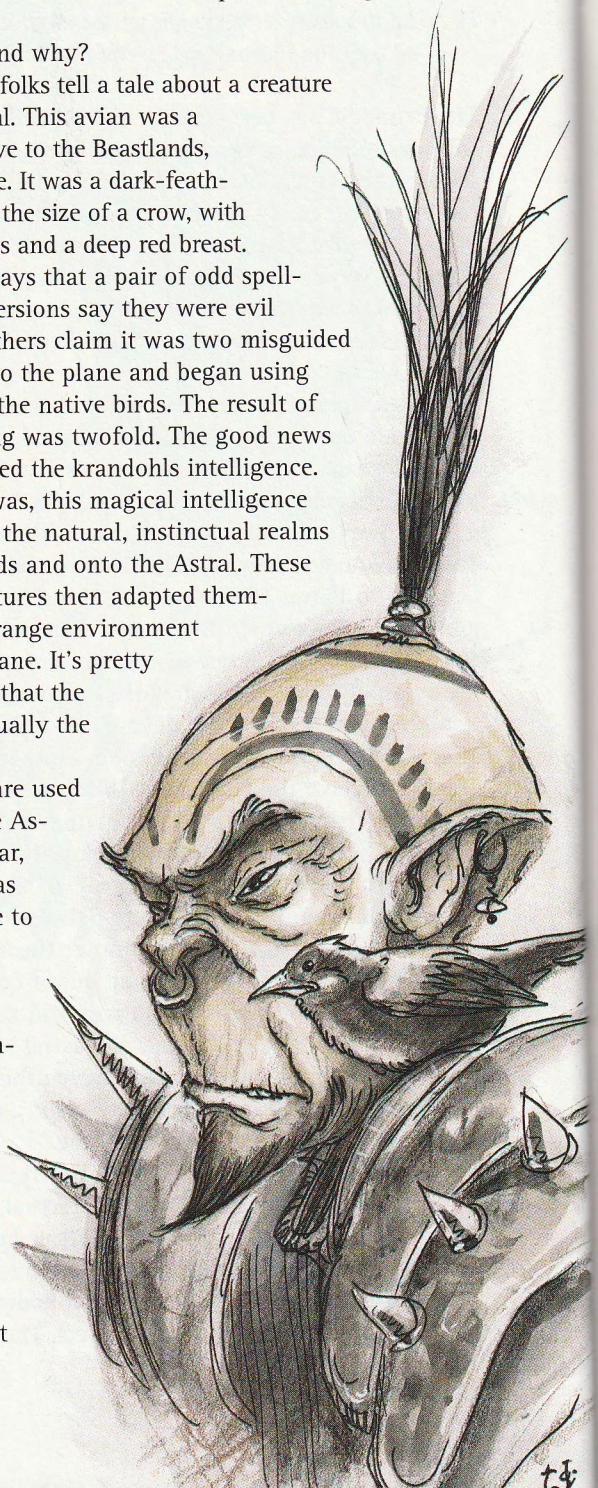
Here's an odd bird (if a body don't mind a pun). Folks claim that these little creatures are native to the Astral, but that doesn't add up at all. They look like terrestrial birds for the most part – why would an Astral creature have wings that're useless on its "home" plane? No, the dark of it must be that these birds came from someplace else originally.

But how, and why?

Well, some folks tell a tale about a creature called a krandohl. This avian was a small beast native to the Beastlands, but nowhere else. It was a dark-feathered bird, about the size of a crow, with bright green eyes and a deep red breast.

The story says that a pair of odd spellcasters (some versions say they were evil priests, while others claim it was two misguided wizards) came to the plane and began using their magic on the native birds. The result of their spellcasting was twofold. The good news was, they granted the krandohls intelligence. The bad news was, this magical intelligence cast them from the natural, instinctual realms of the Beastlands and onto the Astral. These intelligent creatures then adapted themselves to the strange environment of the Astral Plane. It's pretty easy to believe that the krandohl is actually the astral streaker.

Streakers are used by those on the Astral (in particular, the githyanki) as messengers due to their intelligence. They have an innate homing instinct that allows them to make their way to astral locations with great speed, despite the fact

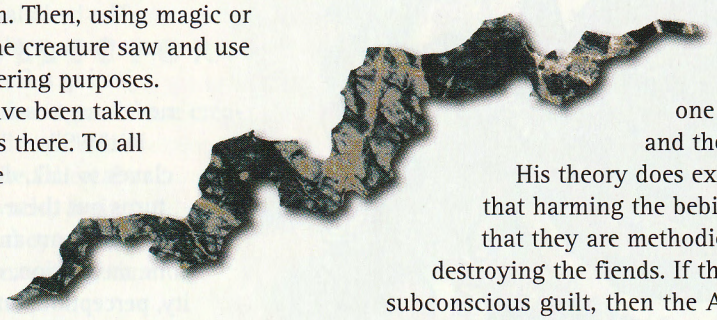


that their small-scale movement rate is not all that high when compared to a githyanki. They can travel to any astral locale that they have been to before in one or two days. Initially, their trainers have to take them to these places, but the streakers teach their own young the travel routes.

Wait a minute: young? On the Astral? Any cutter knows that time doesn't pass here. Well, the current chant is that astral streakers must have hidden nests somewhere on a particular dead god, around whose corpse time does flow. It's the only explanation anyone can come up with. It's certainly possible.

Anyhow, messages are tied to the legs of the streakers in little bundles. The githyanki sometimes send an unladen astral streaker to a particular location, commanding it to simply look around and return. Then, using magic or psionics, they retrieve what the creature saw and use the information for reconnoitering purposes.

A number of the birds have been taken to Sigil to serve as messengers there. To all appearances, the streakers like their job delivering messages. The astral streaker is described further in *In the Cage: A Guide to Sigil.*



✦ ASTRAL WHALE ✦

Sometimes there's things that a body just can't explain. Astral whales are one. Near as anyone can figure, they came from the Living Sea (see the chapter called "Locations in Nowhere: Specific Astral Encounters"), just swimming out into astral space one day and never going back.

See, astral whales look just like whales that a Clueless might be familiar with from some ocean on the Prime. They're the same beast, but they're much more intelligent than those on the Prime, evidently, because they can move very quickly through the Astral.

These huge beasts move through the plane like gigantic nomads. They've got no predators to cause them worry save the occasional githyanki hunting parties on astral ships. Efforts to communicate with them always come to naught – they just want to be left alone (and what better place for such an attitude than the Astral?).

Reference the common whale in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ tome.

✦ BEBILITH ✦

Most sources name the Abyss as the cause of these terrible creatures. What very, very few realize is that the Astral Plane is really their home. The adventurous Indep sage Kalo Seth was the first to notice that when these creatures were in danger (which doesn't happen often) they fled to the Astral Plane. He noticed that through some natural ability, they can travel to the Astral whenever they wish, sometimes taking prey with them against the poor sod's will.

What Kalo suggests is that the bebiliths are actually creatures of thought, born on the Astral like an astral searcher. Bebiliths are different, however, because they consist only of penitence and guilt.

These fiendlike horrors punish evil with evil, yet somehow manage to earn evil's respect. Kalo suggests that they are only just starting with the tanar'ri, methodically destroying them for the wrongs they've committed. From there, they will move on to other evildoers, perhaps cosmically ending with themselves, creatures of evil in their own right, for the sins they themselves are guilty of committing while carrying out their task.

This is all conjecture from one man. No one knows if he's right or wrong, and the bebiliths sure aren't talking. His theory does explain why the tanar'ri believe that harming the bebiliths is taboo, despite the fact that they are methodically hunting them down and destroying the fiends. If they are creatures of evil's own subconscious guilt, then the Astral would definitely be the place of their birth.

Kalo suggests that the bebiliths travel to other planes by a form of reverse astral projection. That is to say, they are creatures of pure thought that magically create physical bodies for themselves and send them to physical planes. This would mean that some silver cordlike link exists between bebeliths on the Abyss and their "real" mental bodies on the Astral. It also means that destroying the physical form of a bebilith on the Abyss does not permanently destroy the creature by any means.

Kalo said that he found an ancient citadel that predates virtually any known mortal civilization, built out of the *dismembered* pieces of a dead god. This citadel, constructed of memories and dreams made solid, was the home of the creatures of living penitence. It was the citadel of the bebiliths, a catacomb of astral webbing (apparently the true astral form of the bebilith has some mental counterpart to the physical bebilith's spiderlike webs) and stonelike god flesh. No one else has ever been able to find it, and Kalo refuses to go back. He likewise resists any effort to make him tell more of what went on in this rueful warren of punishment, other than to say that the screams that came from the place alone guard it from intruders.

Bebiliths are abhorrent, misshapen spiders with chitinous shells. They possess barbs on their two forelegs, and the fangs in their mouths drip poisonous fluid. If a bebilith hits with one of its forelegs, it will cause 2d4 points of damage. Their bite not only causes 2d6 points of damage, but the victim must also make a successful saving throw versus poison with a -2 penalty or die in 1d4 rounds. For further information, reference the bebilith in the PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM *Appendix.*

✦ BERBALANG ✦

Sad little solitaire,
sad little hermit.
Wandering so far and near,
has no self-worth to it.

– From the poem, *Berbalang,* by Tycho Sint, known as one of the worst poets in all Sigil

Ah, the Astral sure isn't the home of anything normal, is it? Case in point: the odd little berbalang, and the equally odd community that it has on the Astral.

The berbalang's a native of the Prime, but one that spends most of its time astrally projecting a form on the Astral. The creatures never meet each other in their real bodies, but in the Silver Void they gather into little enclaves to talk, debate, learn, and even mate. It turns out these solitary creatures are philosophers at heart and spend much of their time in lone meditation, contemplating existence, reality, perception, and a virtually limitless number of other topics. Then, they gather on the Astral to exchange their theories.

A few folks have tried to infiltrate the enclaves to learn the dark of berbalang theories. What they tumbled to was that despite their fiendish appearance and monstrous reputation as chaotic evil carnivores (this is the common chant among many primes), their philosophies are remarkably gentle and pleasant. Their outlook on life and the multiverse is usually extraordinarily positive, uplifting, and wondrous. The strange thing is, they don't feel they have any rightful place in it. They resign themselves to be loathsome, murderous monsters undeserving of love or kindness from others.

These gatherings of astral berbalangs occur within structures created by the berbalangs for this purpose. The outside of a berbalang meeting hall is always made of a silvery, semireflective metal so that it is hard to see in astral space. They are a peery folk, so these structures are well-protected and well-guarded, with plenty of exits from which to flee.

See, as a general rule, berbalangs are cowardly bashers who avoid direct confrontation with any other creature. Sometimes, however, they'll follow a cutter around, apparently only to observe. For this reason, some folks call them stalkers. Stalkers never attack on the Astral Plane and flee immediately upon being threatened. Though these carnivores feed every now and again, such activities are always to their

physical bodies on the Prime – so it's no concern for a cutter on the Astral.

No one knows how, but berbalangs mate on the Astral in such a way that they produce physical offspring on the Prime. It's been suggested that this is an indicator that berbalangs aren't normal physical creatures at all.

BERBALANG: AC 6; MV 6, Fl 24 (B); HD 4+1; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d6 (claw/claw/bite); SZ M (4′–7″ tall); ML average (10); Int very (11–12); AL CE; XP 65.

Notes: The berbalang can astrally project (as *astral spell*) at will and can create an astral-like physical projection on the Prime that can act and fight as the actual berbalang.

✦ BRAIN COLLECTOR ✦

A body won't find cities or gatherings of these creatures on the Astral, thank goodness. While native to some demiplane in the Ethereal or some bizarre prime-material world, brain collectors (or Neh-thalggu, as they call themselves) spend a considerable amount of time on the Astral.

While on the Silver Void, Neh-thalggu rest and recover from their arduous conquests to gain and ingest humanoid brains on the Prime (or rarely, an Outer Plane). This grisly passion consumes them in every way, but they are careful hunters – after fighting, they always take the time to rest in a safe place, like the Astral or Ethereal. Though they prefer to refrain from hunting on the Silver Void, they apparently don't care as to whether the brain is devoured on a physical plane or not. Astral brains are seemingly just as good.

There's some screed that states that these cutters are really inhabitants of some ancient plane that existed long ago that has somehow either been destroyed or cut off from the rest of the multiverse. It is certain that they are very alien in appearance, physiology, and outlook. They don't consider any other creature to be sentient, merely seeing them as food. They have no interest in wealth, power, magic, emotions, or most any other pursuit common to most folks.

Brain collectors have a yellow-orange body with many short, writhing tentacles. They possess six crablike legs, four yellow bulging eyes, and a tooth-filled maw. The head of a brain collector may have several distinctive lumps (up to twelve) that house the brain of another creature. A brain collector attacks by biting for 1d10 points of damage or by casting a spell (one per brain in its head). For further information, reference the brain collector in the MYSTARA® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix.

YES, I'M QUITE SURE
THEY'RE TERRIFYING.
BUT YOU CAN'T EXPECT
ME TO TAKE
SOMETHING CALLED
A "BRAIN COLLECTOR"
SERIOUSLY,
CAN YOU?

— VRINCE MIKKUIN,
A SHORT-LIVED
PLANEWALKER

✦ DHOUR ✦

Like so many other creatures, this resident of the Astral isn't a native, but instead hails from an unknown prime-material world or demiplane. They've only recently come to the planes, able to make it to the Astral or Ethereal but no farther. Only when some other basher uses a way out – like a portal or color pool – can the dhour travel to any other plane.

These predators, then, like to stake out such a place and wait for prey. They're as evil as any fiend, hunting their quarry down mercilessly. Chant is, they devour a body's spirit when they've got her in their amorphous clutches. The worst thing is, a body doesn't even know the dhour's after her until it's too late. The murderous beast doesn't kill immediately. It insidiously marks a cutter's spiritual aura, so that it can follow him anywhere. The dark of it is a victim must find a blood trained in such matters to find and erase the mark or he'll be put in the dead-book.

The githyanki would look favorably upon any known dhour-slayer. These creatures have also quickly gained hated enemies in the shedu, foo creatures, and devas found on this plane.

These large creatures have amorphous bodies of translucent protoplasm. Pulses of light and strange organs move in their bodies. In the center of the mass is a suspended three-lobed brain. When a dhour successfully attacks with a pseudopod, it will inflict 4d4 points of damage. Dhours dislike to use their psionic powers unless they have to. For further information, look for the dhour in the PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM *Appendix II.*

✦ FOO CREATURE ✦

Most often, a foo creature – either dog or lion – will be found on one of the rocky astral islands. They make their lairs amid the floating isles sometimes, although never together (the dogs and lions never mix). It is said that the barking of foo creatures can sometimes be heard carrying much, much farther than other sounds on the Astral.

Despite the similarities in their natures, the chaotic/lawful differences between the shedu and the foo creatures keep them from allying. An astral deva will consider a foo creature a friend, but will never ask it to come into a dangerous situation on the deva's behalf.

Foo creatures possess large, blunt heads with bulging eyes that are wide-set. Foo dogs have long, floppy ears, broad noses, and short bush-tipped tails. The color of their fur may be white, green, violet, gray, or more commonly, golden or black. Foo lions appear similar to foo dogs, except they are larger with longer tails and bigger mouths. They possess shaggy manes and fur of a variety of colors, but the most common colors are black, orange, or gold. Both foo lions and foo dogs bite (2d8 and 1d12 points of damage, respectively) and use their claws (2d4 and 1d4+1 points of damage, respectively) to attack. For further information, reference the foo creature in the PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM *Appendix.*

✦ KODRAGON ✦

These creatures are tiny artists and thinkers inhabiting the realms around the castles of astral dragons. Quick-witted wanderers or child-voiced librarians, kodragons are lovers of knowledge and creativity. They value nothing else. They have no real culture, but do keep detailed records of events, discoveries, and all other data that they can get their tiny hands on.

They look like 1- to 2-foot-long furry dragons with humanlike hands in which they can hold a stylus and tablet. They use their *teleport* and *plane shift* abilities to serve as astral dragons' emissaries, spies, and agents, leaving the localized realms and even the Astral when needed.

KODRAGON: AC 5; MV 6, Fl 24 (A); HD 5; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d6 (claw/claw/bite); SA breathe a 10′ diameter cloud of gas that shrinks victims to 5% of their size *or* cancels that effect from a previous breath (saving throw negates); SD *teleport* and *plane shift* at will; SZ S (3′ wingspan); ML elite (13); Int exceptional (15–16); AL N; XP 975.

✦ SHEDU ✦

Shedu are noble, benevolent creatures that roam the planes, though they routinely make the Prime their case of choice. Fiercely lawful as well as good, these champions of their alignment crusade against evil. This brings them into combat with not only fiends and other travelers on the Astral, but the githyanki as well.

In fact, if it wasn't for the githzerai and the illithids, shedu would possibly be the most hated of foes of the githyanki. Many shedu show no mercy when combating pure evil and have wiped out entire settlements of their astral foes.

Some shedu have traveled all the way to Sigil, and some have found a home in planar culture. They typically join the Guvners, the Harmonium, and even the Mercykillers. Others who've made their way to Mount Celestia become members of the Order of the Planes-Militant. These groups welcome the shedu for their strongly held convictions and considerable power. The planar shedu still frequent the Astral, looking to aid (and possibly recruit) good folks and destroy evil ones.

On the Silver Void, these cutters are found in groups of five or six most of the time, often led by a greater shedu. They're as likely to be astrally projecting from the Prime as traveling physically.

Shedu possess powerful equine bodies with short feathered wings. Beards and mustaches cover their large, humanoid heads. Although shedu prefer to use their psionic powers, they can attack with their front hooves (1d6 points of damage). Look for the shedu in the MONSTROUS MANUAL tome.

✦ SPECTRAL HOUND ✦

The githyanki claim to have created spectral hounds, breeding them from some other sort of planar canine (or possibly something from the Prime). If this is true, then they apparently sold the secret or it was stolen, for the hounds are used throughout the Outer Planes by all manner of powers, fiends, celestials, and more. While the most beneficial use of the hounds is to employ them on tracking missions on a plane that borders the Astral (but not the Astral itself), the githyanki use them on the Silver Void.

These hounds have the ability to shift back and forth from the Astral at will, and their bite causes others to fade slowly onto the Astral (on the Astral Plane, this has no effect). They can track quarry through any medium – even the Silver Void.

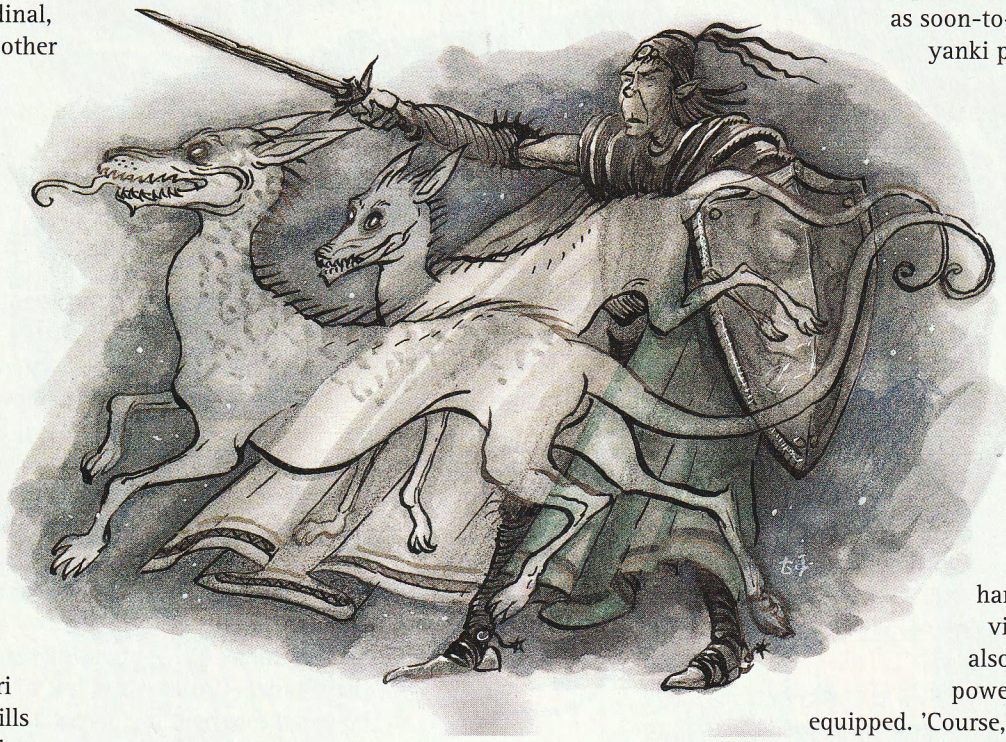
Most githyanki communities have a kennel of these hounds for use as trackers and guardians. Some of the spectral hounds have escaped domestication to roam the Astral in small family-related wild packs.

Spectral hounds look like ghostly dogs when on the Prime Material Plane, but appear normal while on the Astral Plane. They can track as rangers, with a basic tracking score of 25. They also have a 50% chance to detect invisible creatures and have a +2 bonus on surprise rolls. Their bite inflicts 2d6 points of damage. For further information, reference the spectral hound in the MYSTARA MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM *Appendix*.

✦ OTHER CREATURES ✦

Most bashers and beasts a traveler will encounter on the Astral don't live there. Fiends, celestials, and everything in between use the Astral to get from one plane to another.

Though aasimon use the Astral as a means to get around, it's really only the astral devas that spend any time here. Occasionally a body'll see a guardinal, eladrin, asuras, or other such upper-planar being on the Astral, but it's pretty rare. Ki-rin and phoenixes are other powerful creatures of good found wandering about the Astral Plane, but more than likely, they are just passing through as any other traveler.



Sometimes, the Blood War that rages between the tanar'ri and the baatezu spills over into planes other than the nether realms, and the Astral is usually the among the first to see such action. Chant is, however, that most fiends don't like fighting on the Astral, so battles are usually short – which is rare for the Blood War. Most of the time, fiends use a two-way color pool in an attempt to outmaneuver their foes on a lower-planar battleground. This turns into a battle on the Astral when the other side tries to outmaneuver *them*. Sometimes fiends'll try to recruit or garnish the githyanki to assist them in such skirmishes, but such alliances are usually short-lived. The githyanki have their own concerns.

Slaadi can be found traveling through the Astral at times, as can yugoloths and night hags. None stay very long, although some make occasional stops at the tavern called Speck in the Void along with other planar travelers. The tavern is built on nothing, encompassing three color pools within its massive structure. One of the proprietors is a ko-dragon (the other's a tiefling who tends bar and acts as host) that uses veiled threats concerning a nearby mated pair of astral dragons to keep the peace. Most of the time, it works.

A baku Great One named Quy dwells on the corpse of an unknown power. She lives in a palace that is somehow completely invisible on the outside (but not from within). Chant is that other baku come to visit her for advice and consultation.

The spiritlike rakshasa come to the Astral for solace from their war against humans on the Prime Material. Likewise, many titans (*not* the Greater Titans that are trapped on Carceri) come to the Astral Plane for the solitude its vast expanses offer.

Githzerai from Limbo are found on the Astral only in raiding parties, as assassins, or as soon-to-be-dead githyanki prisoners. They know as they come to the Astral Plane that they are entering enemy territory from which they may not return. Such githzerai are always particularly resolved and hard-bitten individuals. They're also usually quite powerful and well-equipped. 'Course, githzerai that associate with other planar races and become planewalkers should take the same precautions, but some of the leatherheads just don't think before they take action. That's the "planes' way of weeding out the addlecoves," they say.

As for planar travelers like humans, they're found on the Astral in greater numbers than anyone but the githyanki themselves. Members of the Sign of One come to the Astral infrequently to study the dead powers there. Likewise, information-gathering Guvners study the conditions and contents of the Astral. They figure if there are loopholes to find in the multiverse, the "backstage" area might be just the place to find them. Finally, the Athar maintain a citadel on the Astral, though it's small compared to some faction structures on other planes.

Locations in Nowhere: Specific Astral Encounters

It should come as no surprise to anyone that there's no map of the Astral. It being both infinite (in perceived size) and infinitesimal (in reality), some scribbling on a piece of paper seems pretty ridiculous. There are no borders, territories, or even landmarks on the Astral. It doesn't do any good to rattle a body's bone-box about the Athar Citadel being 500 miles from the Living Sea since travel times depend more on what a body knows than how far apart two locations are. In fact, distance apart never even figures into it – there is no distance on the Astral. Things just are where they seem to be – a body just needs to think about a place, and a he'll get there.

✦ The Athar Citadel ✦

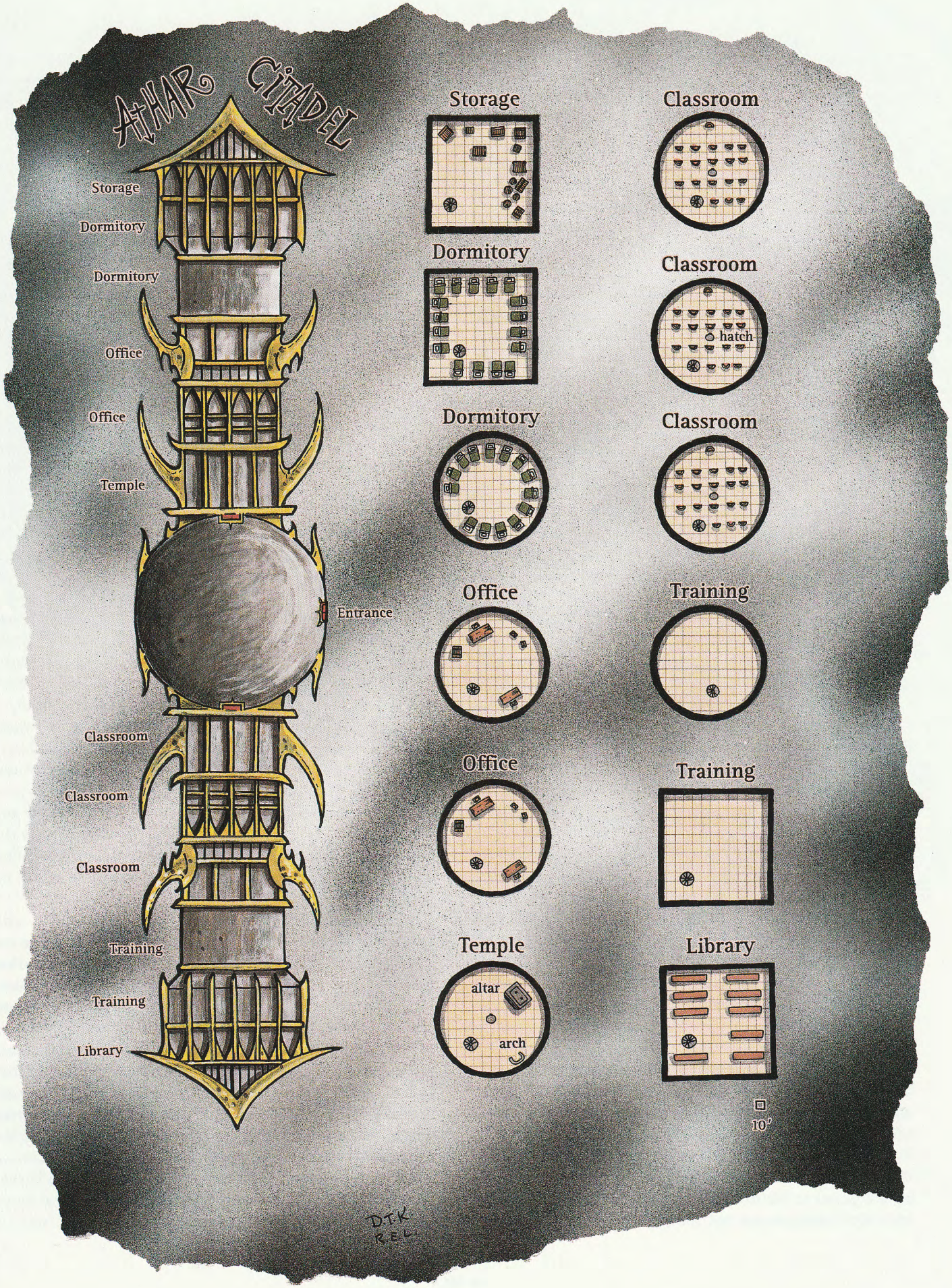
The major faction presence on the Astral is the Athar Citadel. These folks love being around the dead powers – it shows that the powers are no better than any mortal, in their eyes. They've positioned their fortress so that it is within view of three unknown dead powers.

Nevertheless, these bashers aren't stupid, and they know the dark of the Guardian of the Dead Gods. So, they don't actually molest the powers' corpses or even build on them like the githyanki. Instead, their fortress is a free-floating stone structure.

The Athar Citadel is most often referred to as a temple – a shrine dedicated to the Great Unknown in the face of "these fallen pretenders," as they are called by Factor Tobias Gnoas (Pl/♂ human/P12/Athar/N), leader of the citadel. Unlike so many of the faction's safe-houses throughout the planes, this place is not a ruin. Instead, its brand-new construction facilitates the training of Athar priests and insurgents who specialize in overthrowing religions, debunking beliefs, and undermining faith in the powers. Because of the unpopularity of these activities, the citadel is guarded well.

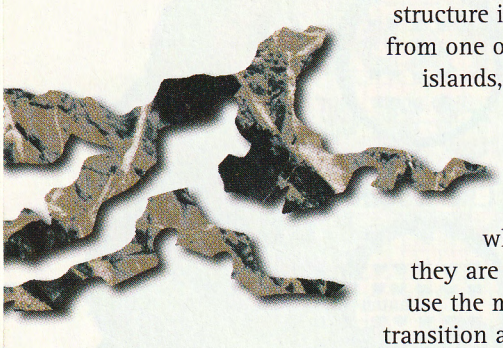
Factor Gnoas is a proud man, loyal to a fault and dedicated to the purpose of the citadel. He takes the training which goes on here very seriously, as well as its defending against the githyanki, who occasionally seek to destroy the structure. Though few defenders are stationed here full time, the priest can summon reinforcements from the Outlands or even Sigil with surprising speed thanks to the color pool found in the temple. Though he's getting on in years (and looks even older than he really is), this staid, earnest man is committed to his duty and refuses to let anything prevent him from his work.

> THINK THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THE POWERS? WRONG. THEY'RE JUST THE BIGGEST MONSTERS OF THEM ALL. THEY CAN BE KILLED LIKE ANYTHING ELSE. JUST LOOK AROUND.
>
> — MARI TORSAVA OF THE GODSLAYERS


Athar Citadel
Storage
Dormitory
Dormitory
Office
Office
Temple
Entrance
Classroom
Classroom
Classroom
Training
Training
Library
Storage
Dormitory
Dormitory
Office
Office
Temple
altar
arch
Classroom
Classroom
hatch
Classroom
Training
Training
Library
10'
D.T.K.
R.E.L.

CITADEL LAYOUT

From the outside, the citadel looks like a double-ended tower – a long narrow structure with a "roof" at both ends made of a bluish stone. The entire structure is made of stone, quarried from one of the Astral's big floating islands, and all rooms except the entrance have gravity (granted by magic stolen from the githyanki) oriented to whichever end of the tower they are on. As a result, the Athar use the middle entrance room as a transition area.



CLASSROOMS. These rooms contains writing desks and school-related supplies. The Athar give lectures and written tests here.

DORMITORIES. The many residents of the citadel call kip in these rooms, including the guards, the trainers, the trainees, the priests, and the high-ups.

ENTRANCE. This spherical area has openings leading "up" to both towers. Five guards always stand watch here (Pl/var/F2/Athar/var) armed with broad swords and light crossbows. They can quickly summon help both in the form of 15 reinforcements and in the trainees, priests, and high-ups normally found either in or near this area.

LIBRARY. This large library, which can be used by anyone dwelling here, has extensive resources concerning gods, religion, and related topics, as well as more general information. Factor Gnoas constantly tells trainees to "know thy enemy."

OFFICES. These rooms serve as offices for the citadel high-ups including Gnoas, his assistant Athaon Garla Fistian (Pr/♀ half-elf/P5/Athar/LN), guard captain Ridgath Ro (Pl/♂ bariaur/F8/Athar/LG), and chief instructor Athaon Bria Mossiki (Pl/♀ human/M6/Athar/N).

STOREROOMS. Everything the citadel needs, from food (although not much is needed on the Astral) to weapons, can be found here.

TEMPLE. A large room for ceremonies and devotions concerning the Great Unknown, this is a central focus of the citadel and where most of the ten priests on staff can be found most of the time.

This is also where the link to Sigil is located, although it's not a direct route anymore. That is, the Athar used to have a portal to the Astral located in the Shattered Temple, their Sigil headquarters, but the portal closed. Instead, they found another portal that leads to an isolated locale outside of the gate-town of Bedlam. They built a safehouse around this portal, which was fortunately situated near a two-way color pool leading to the Astral. The Athar Citadel on the Astral is built around this color pool.

TRAINING ROOMS. A gymnasium and a sparring area make up the two rooms devoted to training.

✦ THE BONECLOUD ✦

"Skeletal hands grasping at me, bony fingers clawing – it was more horrible than I could have ever imagined. An endless sea of undead killers, all rasping with ancient voices speaking only of death."

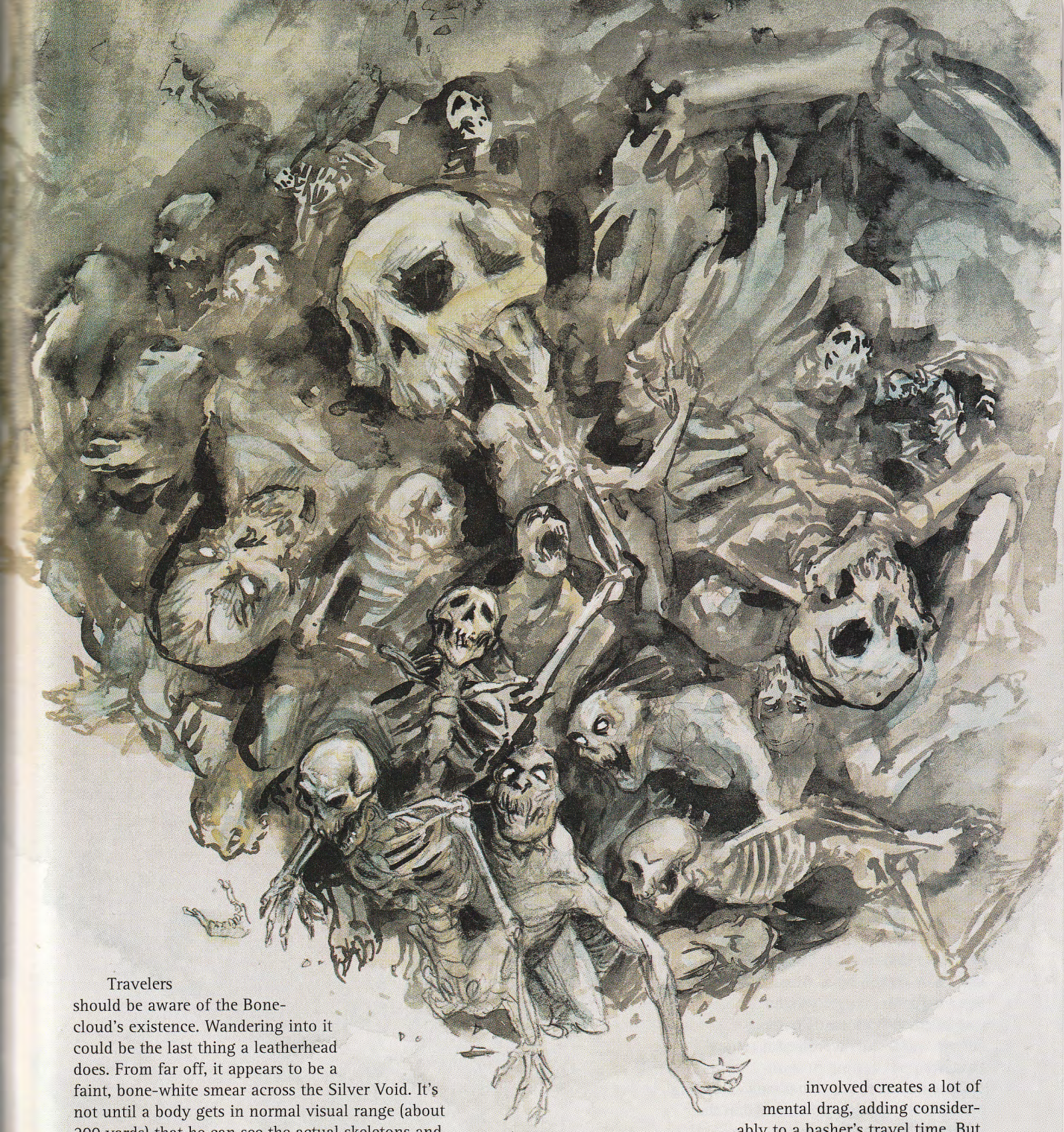
– A first-hand account of the Bonecloud

In what is called the War of Lies on a prime-material world named Terras, an ancient lich created an unimaginably huge army of undead warriors. It's said that when he was done, there were no dead left on Terras. In the face of this horrible foe, a wizard – whose name is lost to time – and a pair of priests of light opened a rift to the Astral Plane, sending the animated horde cascading into the Silver Void.

Being undead automatons, the creatures can't move on the Astral – they've no real minds of their own. That means that there's a huge floating sea of the bashers simply hanging on the Astral Plane. That doesn't mean that they won't attack someone who gets within range, berk! The whole cloud drifts slightly, but for the most part, it's a big, unmoving feature of the plane, made entirely of animated dead.

Some of the undead in the Bonecloud consist of powerful and fearsome types. Though very rare, they exist due to the odd conditions of the location. See, the amount of undead in the Bonecloud, with the negative energy they possess, has opened a tiny rift leading to the Ethereal Plane and a pathway to the Negative Energy Plane. This allows the top-shelf undead, like vampires or wraiths, to exist within the area of the cloud even when they shouldn't be able to on the Astral.

The more intelligent undead that were banished with the animated skeletons and mindless zombies remain in the Bonecloud for a number of reasons, despite the fact that they can move on the Astral (albeit, for some, slowly). Ghouls and ghasts feast on the other undead. The wights, wraiths, ghosts, and vampires remain there because of their link with the Ethereal or Negative Energy Plane. They are effectively trapped within the Bonecloud because of that link – they cannot venture out into the rest of the plane. Supposedly, some of the more powerful and intelligent among them plot and scheme for a way to master all the dead in the cloud and somehow mobilize them. Chant is, there's more than one living necromancer or other basher who's trying to tumble to a way to get them all to move and make them an army again.



Travelers should be aware of the Bonecloud's existence. Wandering into it could be the last thing a leatherhead does. From far off, it appears to be a faint, bone-white smear across the Silver Void. It's not until a body gets in normal visual range (about 200 yards) that he can see the actual skeletons and zombies that comprise the Bonecloud. Even then, a basher's only seeing the very edge of the phenomenon. By earthly standards, the cloud is hundreds of miles across. 'Course, that doesn't really mean anything in astral terms.

The point is, it takes from two to six hours to go around it (which is probably a cutter's best bet). The negative energy involved creates a lot of mental drag, adding considerably to a basher's travel time. But what's a body to do? No one is going to go through this mass of undead willingly, right?

Wrong. See, a few canny cutters have "hollowed out" places in the Bonecloud and built fortresses. By using undead-destroying magic, they eradicated all of the undead in an area *within* the Bonecloud, thus creating a safe zone in-

side the mass. 'Course, the inhabitants still have to be powerful enough to deal with wandering, intelligent undead that do indeed move, but these mobile undead are thankfully rare.

What's more, there are plenty of color pools that a body might want to get at within the Bonecloud. In fact, it's known that pools leading to Mount Celestia (somewhere near Heart's Faith), the gate-town of Rigus on the Outlands, and Alfheim on Ysgard can be found within, as well as hundreds of others. Chant is, some real nasty berk severed a conduit that runs through the Bonecloud, and now the conduit dumps anyone using it into the heart of this undead sea.

If a body wants to get to a location within the Bonecloud, there's only about two ways to do it. The first is to use *teleport* or some similar magic. That's the easiest and safest way – but it's not always available (that sort of spell is top-shelf magic). The second, much harder way is to fight through. Here's when having a priest on a body's side really helps out. A priest that can turn undead to the degree that they are destroyed can simply use this power to clear a path, at least through the minor undead of the cloud. Regular turning doesn't help, because the undead can't go anywhere – that's why they're here in the first place.

Use Table V below to determine the type of undead encountered in the Bonecloud. Most individual figures are five to ten feet apart (yes, berk, that means that there are *millions* of undead in this cloud).

TABLE V: BONECLOUD UNDEAD ENCOUNTERS

01–50	Skeleton
51–75	Zombie
76–80	Skeletal Animal
81–85	Skeletal Monster
86–90	Giant Skeleton
91–95	Monster Zombie
96	Heucuva*
97	Ghoul*
98	Wight*
99	Ghast*
00	Special*

* These creatures are able to move (although some very slowly), yet stay within the Bonecloud nonetheless.

Special results are determined by the DM. These encounters can include various types of undead such as vampires or undead beasts.

THE COLORLESS POOL

For many years, the colorless pool was only a legend. It now represents proof that often legends turn out to be based on fact. The legends told of a color pool that could not be seen, for it was made of all colors. It could only be found by listening, for out of it issued the words, whispers, screeches, and sounds of all the planes. The chant was that it was a color pool that led everywhere.

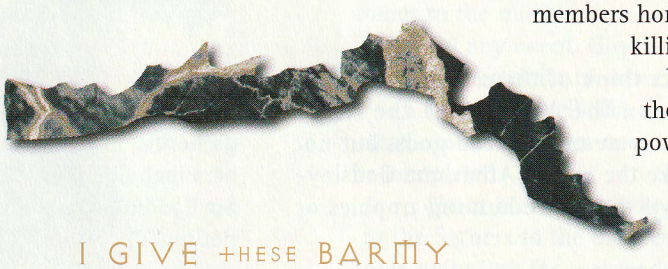
The chant was right. The colorless pool exists, and it does lead everywhere. Through some strange fluke, when this pool opened up, the hole it made was positioned on some sort of fluctuating point. This pool will take anyone entering it to anyplace that he can think of.

The drawback is this: Because of the quirky way the pool works, it lets through sound from the places it's connected to – and it's connected to everywhere. Sound pours from it so that anyone within 100 yards can barely stand it. No individual sounds can be detected, only an overall clamor. To actually step into the pool is to go deaf – and there's no protection or immunity in the planes that'll save a body from this fate. Of course, since the constant din shatters a body's auditory organs, it is possible to regain hearing through use of the *regenerate* spell. Despite the fact that the colorless pool allows sound to come into the Astral from everywhere else, it provides only one-way transport.

Because it's invisible, a body can't use the pool to scry as other color pools can. Fact is, there's not much about the colorless pool that resembles a normal color pool, but graybeards claim that it's the same sort of phenomenon.

The legends say that the pool can be found only by listening for it, and those stories are right, too. Even if a body tells someone about the colorless pool, that basher can't get there just by thinking about it (no one knows why, exactly). He's got to be led by someone who's been there before, or he's got to wander about the Astral, listening for the cacophony. That's a ride that'll take a leatherhead about – oh – a few hundred years (if he's lucky).

There's even more to tell about the pool, however. An illithid named Varlomor (who's now, of course, deaf) uses the hidden location of the colorless pool as a place to hide from his enemies, the githyanki. Varlomor (Pl/♂ mind flayer/HD 8+4/LE) works as a spy, sent by his kind to watch the githyanki and report back on their activities. He keeps his presence a secret, and if discovered poses as a tiefling (he wears a cloak and hood which covers most of his features) until he can put those who mark him in the dead-book.



I GIVE THESE BARMY "GODSLAYERS" ABOUT SIX MONTHS BEFORE SOME POWER ANNIHILATES THEM WITH A STRAY THOUGHT.

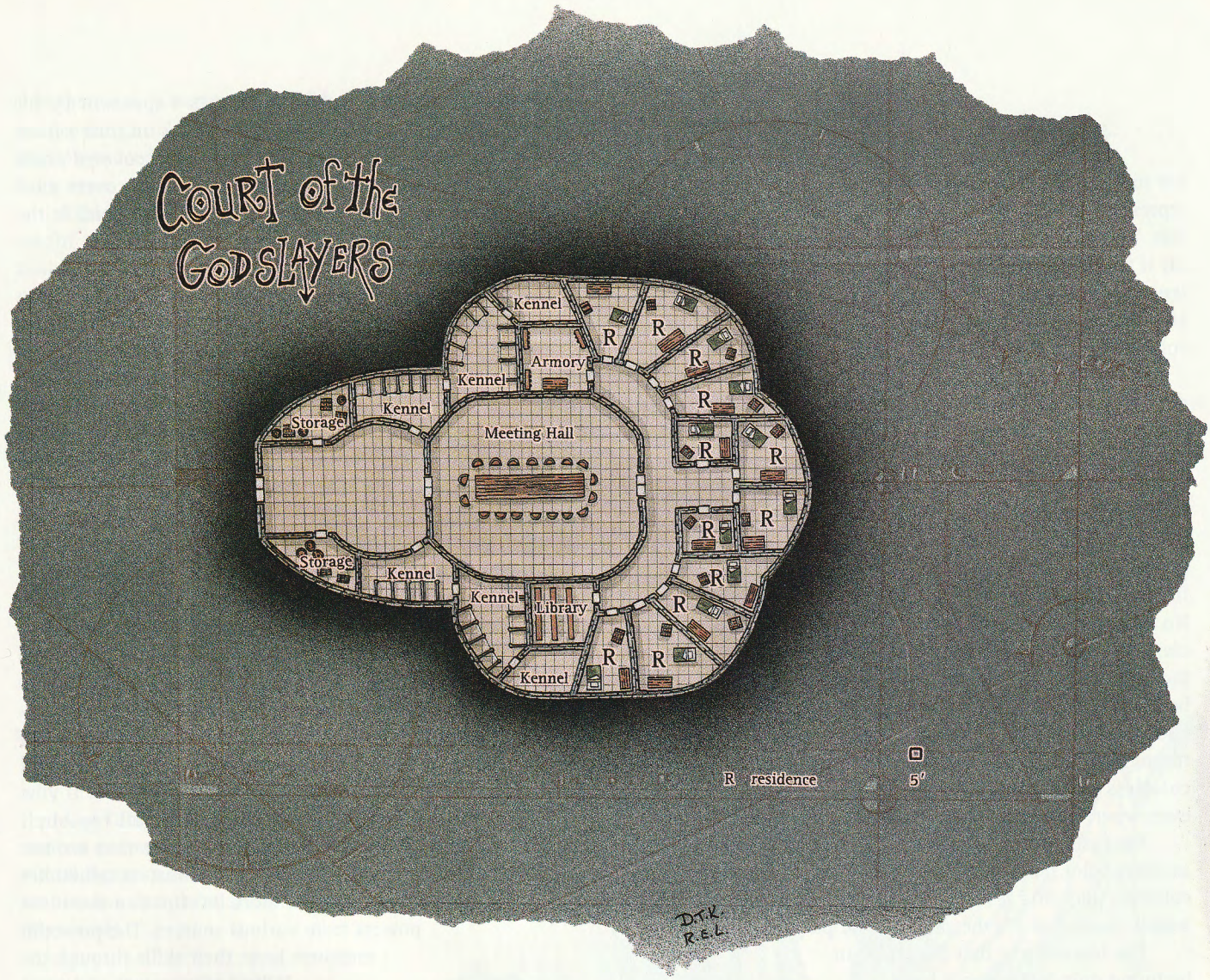
— TAVAR NORSIC, PRIEST OF ODIN

THE COURT OF THE GODSLAYERS

Now here's a pretentious group of berks if ever there was one. They're a splinter group of the Athar, kicked out because of their militant attitude. The Godslayers go one step further than the simple belief that the powers aren't actually deities or immortal gods; they think that the powers should be destroyed. Not a philosophy to adopt if a body likes living, really. Nonetheless, these bashers call themselves Godslayers. 'Course, they haven't ever killed a god, but ask them about that, and they'll say it's only a matter of time. Most other folks say that it's a bunch of screed, and that these high-up-wanna-be's are mindlessly rattling their bone boxes. Others think they are a dangerous bunch of well-armed lunatics. The Athar knew enough to give them the boot (though for all practical purposes, these folks are still considered Defiers).

The members of the Court are almost all top-shelf hunters or extremely powerful bloods. Those that are not perform the more mundane tasks of the Court or sometimes research and gather more information about the powers from various sources. The powerful members hone their skills through the killing of monsters and great beasts until the day when they're ready to challenge a power (or so they believe).

Mari Torsaval (Pl/♀ human/F10/Athar/NE) is the leader of this group, which is made up of all types of bashers – except priests. Although they are not strictly an evil group, neither do they seem particularly benevolent. A few see the quest to destroy the powers as good and just, while many more just see it as music it's time the powers paid. Mari is working toward an alliance with Mercykillers who might be persuaded to think that justice can be delivered even to the powers, but so far she's been unsuccessful.



Whatever other folks think of them, the Godslayers have their own fortress on the Astral. Like the Athar Citadel, it is located near some of the dead gods, but not actually *on* one. But unlike the rest of Athar, the Godslayers regard the corpses as if they were hunting trophies or some such.

COURT LAYOUT

Surprisingly, the Court's citadel is not particularly well-defended. The members, in their arrogance, believe that they can handle whatever comes along.

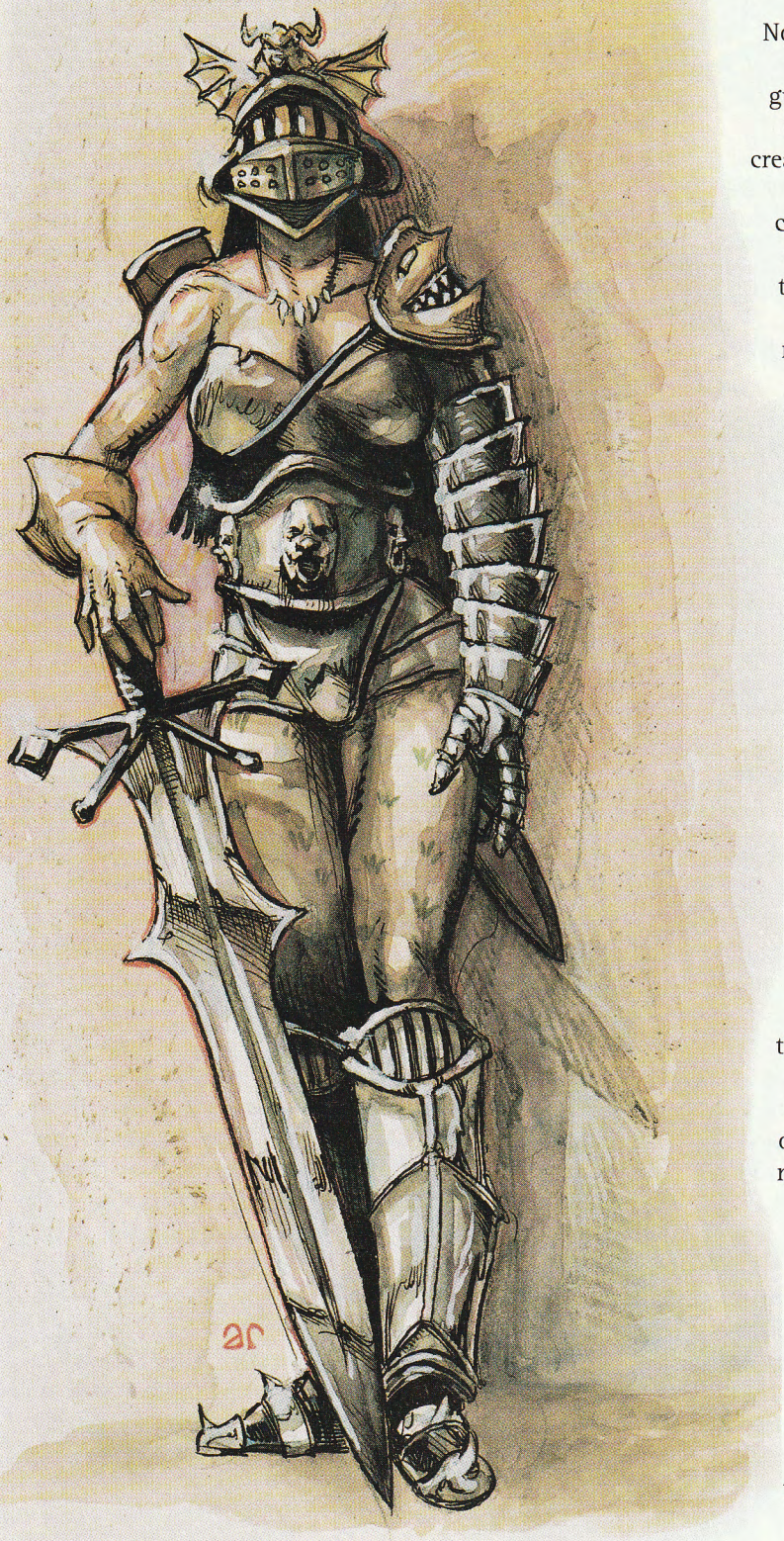
ARMORY. "The right tool for the right job," Mari always says. This armory contains, in addition to mundane weapons of every conceivable kind from across the planes, a number of magical weapons. Some of the most potent are within a sealed and locked vault protected with a *symbol of death* and an iron golem. The vault holds a *hammer of thunderbolts*, a *vorpal blade*, a *frost brand*, a *flame tongue*, a *sword +2, dragon slayer*, a *sword +2, giant slayer*, a number of *arrows of slaying*, and – rumor has it – an artifact or two.

COURT RESIDENCES. The various members of the Court use these rooms when staying here (when they're not hunting or gathering information). Some of the more important members include Chail Markov (Pl/♂ half-elf/M16,T16/Athar/N), Sir Baddinil Krausinou (Pr/♂ human/F12/LN), and Fe (Pl/♂ tiefling/T17/Athar/CE).

KENNELS. The Court has a number of trained or *charmed* creatures in its service. These include four fhorges, ten spectral hounds, and a fearsome retriever. They also keep three nightmares and ten griffins to be used as mounts (off-plane).

LIBRARY. This considerable storehouse of knowledge focuses on combat tactics, monster ecologies, and powers (not on religion, but the powers themselves).

MEETING HALL. A huge wooden table surrounded by large chairs dominates this room. The rest of the chamber is filled with hunting trophies – including monster heads and entire beasts stuffed and floating within the room. The more impressive kills found here include a bebilith, a beholder, a gorgon, and a ki-rin.



✦ THE DIVINITY LEECH ✦

Not every berk's smart enough to give the dead gods their proper respect, or at least to keep from angering their guardian. A basher named Ghyris Vast (Pl/♂ human/F10/Bleak Cabal/CN) is taking his life into his own hands by creating something he calls the Divinity Leech.

Ghyris has built a compound of buildings on the corpse of a forgotten power (which has no gravity). Peery that there are others who would want to steal his invention, he's surrounded himself with reave mercenaries and allied himself with a pair of rakshasas, Il-temid (Pl/♂ rakshasa/HD 7/LE) and Khosun (Pl/♂ rakshasa/HD 7/LE). Certain folks say that it was actually the rakshasas who created the Divinity Leech, but that they were too afraid to test it, so they gave it to barmy Ghyris to try. Most cutters lanned to the dark of these things – including, of course, Ghyris himself – would deny such chant.

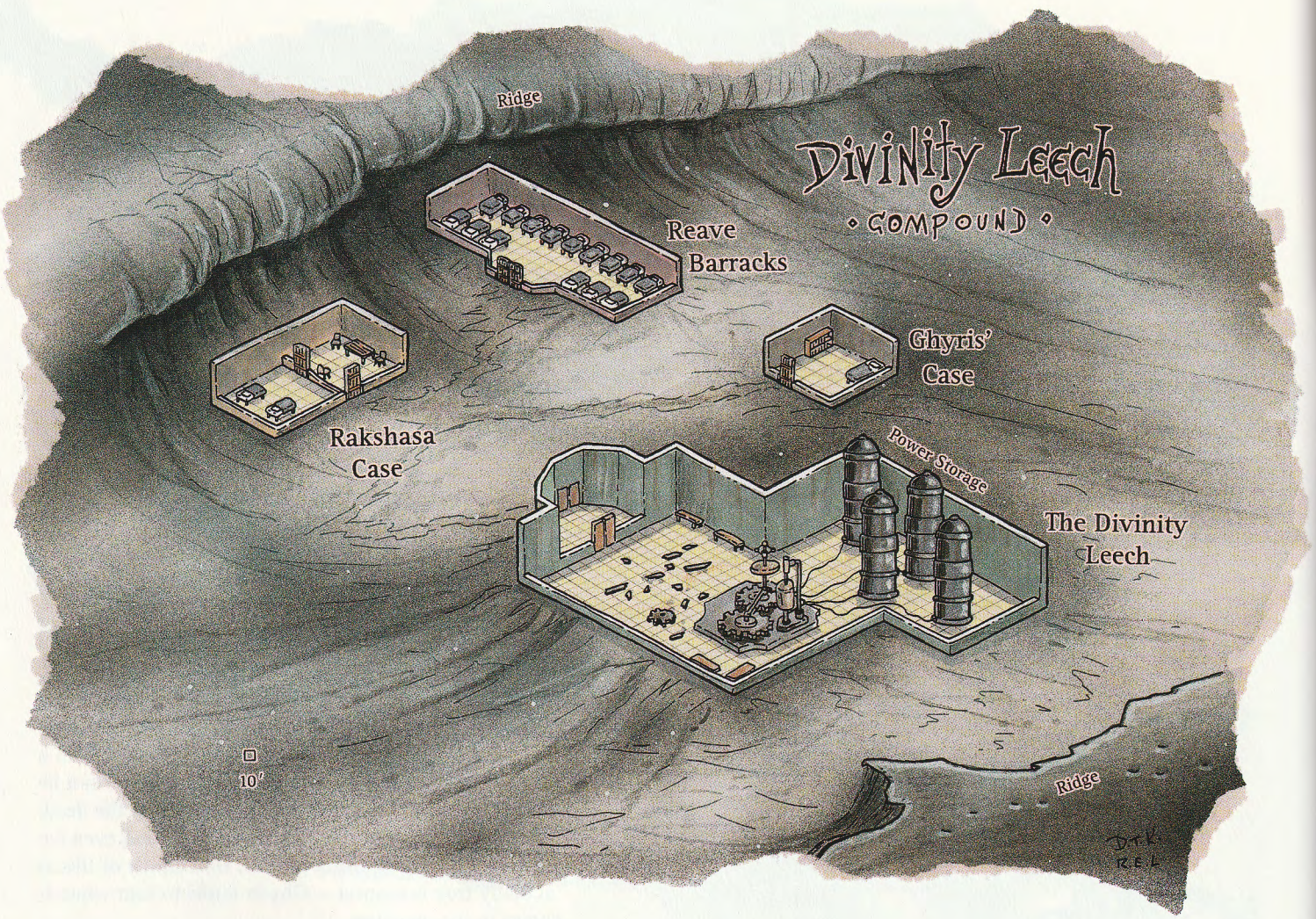
The Divinity Leech is a huge semimagical machine that supposedly draws the life energy from a dead god. This energy (again, supposedly) can be used for such varied purposes as raising the dead, creating and powering magical items, and even (so Ghyris claims) creating portals. How much of this is actually true is suspect – Ghyris tends to rant when it comes to the machine.

In any event, Ghyris believes it all to be true – and his allies claim to as well (although it could all be an elaborate peel). The compound is finished, so all that needs to happen now is for the Divinity Leech to be completed.

Chant has it that every group, from the Guvners to the Signers to the baatezu, would be willing to pay some hefty jink for somebody to sneak in and find out the true dark of the Divinity Leech and whether or not it really works. Most people fear that the compound may be attacked at any moment by the fury of the Guardian of the Dead Gods. (Others claim that the fact that it hasn't attacked yet indicates that the Leech doesn't work.)

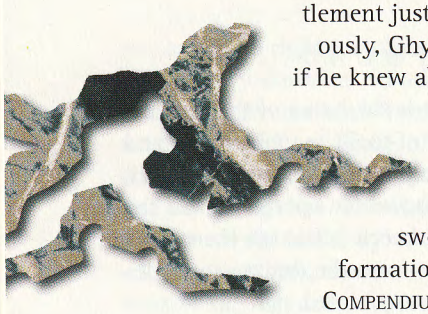
THE COMPOUND

Ghyris's Case. This hut is the home of the mad inventor. Amid the clutter of tools, machine parts and books, a body'll find the journals of Ghyris himself, revealing the dark on the whole operation, and the plans for the Divinity Leech (although there have been extensive modifications on the design, some detailed in the journals, some only hinted at).



RAKSHASA CASE. The pair of rakshasa lives in this building. The interior is finely appointed with expensive furnishings. There's even magically running water for bathing (a rare luxury on the Astral Plane). The rakshasas' only real duty is to maintain a presence here, so that knights of the post and such keep their distance.

REAVE BARRACKS. These horrid bashers are stationed here to protect the place. A foul lot, they grow less and less content with guard duty, and spoil for a fight. Some of them talk of starting a fight with a nearby githyanki settlement just to have something to do. Obviously, Ghyris would be aghast at this idea, if he knew about it.



There are 30 reaves here in all. Ten of them patrol the compound at all times. They are armed with polearms, swords, and shields. For further information, see the PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM *Appendix II.*

THE DIVINITY LEECH. This is what all the ruckus is about. The machine measures approximately 20 feet by 25 feet, and it's over 15 feet high. The Divinity Leech is composed of wires, glass tubing, a large brass centrifuge, steam-powered pumps, and a number of curious gauges, dials, levers, and panels of buttons. A huge coal furnace that is connected to the machine provides power, but while the machine remains unfinished, the furnace is not used. Most of the time, spare parts and tools of all imaginable types are scattered about the floor (and since there's no gravity, throughout the "air" as well). Ghyris is usually found here as well, consumed by his work. Though originally a warrior, this twisted genius now rarely carries a weapon, favoring a tool or slide rule. He's had a few wizards and alchemists help him over the years (or so it's said), but he's finishing the device on his own now.

The power storage devices are essentially batteries in which to store leeched energy drained by the machine. If successful, these constructs will be able to store the energy drained by the Divinity Leech for one year.

✦ THE LIVING SEA ✦

It's there, throbbing and pulsing in a way that water was never meant to move. A body won't find waves here – it's an ocean with no shore. Once you enter the water – and you can, since you still don't need to breathe – you obey its rules. Remember, it's not called the Living *Sea for nothing.*

– Tarsheva Longreach, planewalker

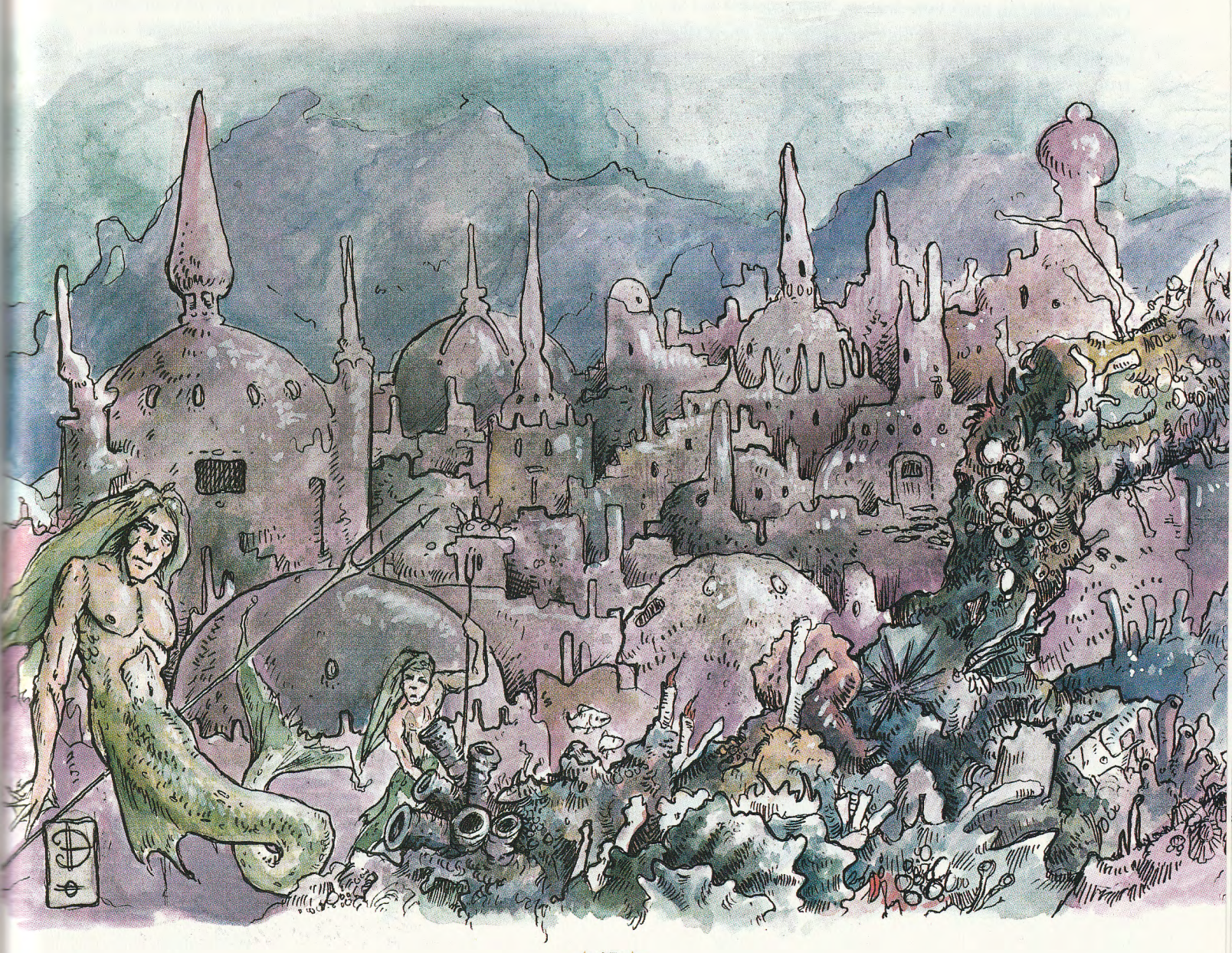
Color pools are dangerous. Don't fool with them. Why? Well, take the Living Sea, for example.

Less than one hundred years ago, some berk (no one remembers his name, and he's probably dead now) was using a color pool to scry. While he looked through it, he did *something*. No one knows what it was. Some say he cast a spell, or used a magical item. Others claim that it couldn't have been something magical, but it had to be something else – maybe something inherent to the pool itself. No matter how a body looks at it, however, the berk goofed. The color pool somehow opened up inward, letting what was on the other side onto the Astral. Unfortunately, on the other side was a huge ocean on a prime-material world.

Water began pouring onto the Astral, and it still does to this day. Some addle-coves spout screed that it has to be stopped, or the Astral will someday be filled with water. These leatherheads obviously don't understand the Astral. Nothing can "fill" the Astral. There's no space to fill up. Besides, the ocean's got to run out of water someday.

So now there's a huge mass of water on the Astral. For the most part, the water has taken on a spherical shape around the color pool. However, it occasionally stretches out slightly in one direction or another, almost (so it's said) like it is reaching for something.

In fact, the chant is that the thoughts drifting through



the Astral Plane have somehow affected this mass of water. Supposedly, they have imbued it with a consciousness of its own – hence the name the Living Sea. It comes from both the way the water moves and spreads, and the idea that it is a living entity all its own.

The other reason for the name is that the sea is full of life. Aquatic creatures by the thousands have poured through the color pool and onto the Astral. Sharks, fish, invertebrates, crustaceans, and various mammals live within the sea. Only a few, such as the whales, have figured out that they can leave the water and move through the rest of the plane just like any other creature. There's no need for breathing, and they can "swim" through the Astral using their mind. The vast majority of the sea life apparently assumes that it is bound by the water – just like on the Prime.

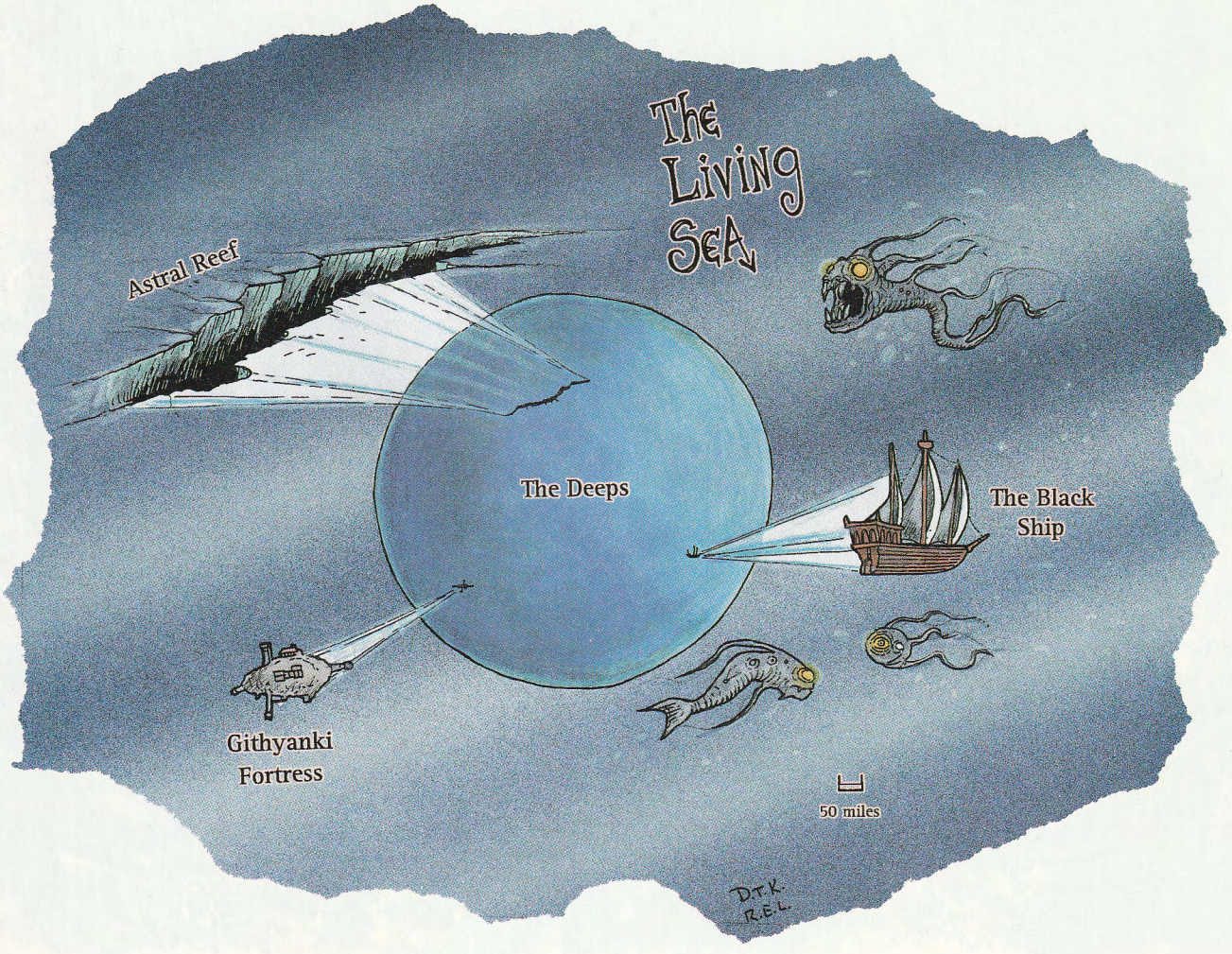
There's intelligent life within the Living Sea too: bashers called sahuagin, locathah, mermen, and others. If they ever venture out of the confines of the sea, they keep it secret, because no one's ever seen them do so.

It's the possible intelligence of the sea itself that has most graybeards busting their brain-boxes. If the chant's true, what is the sea thinking? What does it want? The Xaositects claim that it's a being of chaos, everchanging and infinitely mutable. The more lawful berks counter that it is, if anything, a creature of law, obeying established rules of physics. The Harmonium has actually made attempts to contact the creature to determine its outlook (and to convert it to their way of thinking), but to no avail. No attempts to communicate with the Living Sea have been successful – suggesting, some say, that it isn't intelligent after all. It remains a mystery.

WITHIN THE LIVING SEA

There are various locations within the vast expanse of ocean, but it should be noted that for the most part, the Living Sea is mile upon mile of water, filled only with fish, bits of plant matter, and an occasional rock or clump of mud. It's been noted that in the future, when the original ocean is closer to being fully drained, most likely there will be a great many more plants drawn in through the color pool. The plants, of course, won't grow on the Astral, but they won't die either.

THE ASTRAL REEF. Much of this huge organic mass was pulled in through the color pool in large chunks of coral. Chant is the various intelligent races of the Living Sea used various



techniques – some of them magical – to connect them all and cause the reef to flourish. This provided them with someplace to live and build homes.

The 100-mile-long reef supports a plethora of life. Crabs, lobsters, snails, sea urchins, and other creatures live on the surface, while eels, rays, and various fish live within it.

A number of small locathah clan villages dot the reef's surface, while the mermen have built a larger city, Vavuish, which trades with the locathah. Vavuish's population is said to be approximately 7,000. Chant is aquatic elves, tritons, and even marids can be found in Vavuish, but only in small numbers (there are no communities of these races in the Living Sea, but they may be visitors or small groups stranded here somehow). Within Vavuish a visitor will find dolphins, giant sea horses, hippocampi, and even a neutrally-aligned sea drake.

The sahuagin have at least three well-defended fortresses from which they launch raids on their aquatic cousins, accompanied by large well-trained sharks. Vodyanoi, ixitxachitl, kapoacinth, scrags, giant sea creatures, sea hags, and other horrible monsters inhabit the reef as well.

The Black Ship. A few ships have been pulled in from the Prime where the Living Sea originates, although most, if not all, have apparently been wrecks that had settled at the ocean's floor. Graybeards who've looked at them closely say that they seem to be elven ships – although no one has really made the attempt to go to the prime world and investigate (and it is very difficult to get any information about the surface world from the undersea creatures that now live in the Living Sea).

One ship that isn't a wreck (or so it seems) is something known only as the Black Ship. This large vessel is made of some unknown substance impenetrable by any known force or spell. Thus, no one knows what's inside it, because it's locked up tight. 'Course, most bashers think it's full of treasure or magic or something of that nature, but others fear it could be something malign.

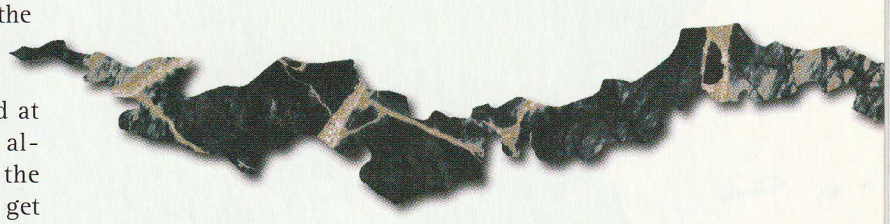
The Black Ship floats in the Living Sea. Most sea creatures keep their distance from the craft.

The Deeps. The region of the Living Sea nearest the color pool from which the sea originated is known as the Deeps. Since it's the center of the sea, getting to the Deeps is a difficult process. A body doesn't have to worry about water pressure, like in a terrestrial sea, but he does have to swim or move against the current (which is always pouring out of – away from – the color pool). This slows movement down considerably (by at least half). This is also where a number of dangerous creatures, such as sahuagin, sea wolves, sea serpents, killer whales, and giant squids lie in wait for new prey to be brought to them via the color pool.

It may be important to note that berks hoping to go through the color pool and back to the world where the Living Sea originated (assuming that they could fight the current and the nasty inhabitants of the Deeps) are going to hit the blinds. The altered color pool now opens only inward – allowing passage onto the Astral but not out. Once all the water is drained from the ocean on the other side, things may be different.

The Githyanki Fortress. A strange group of githyanki have made the Living Sea their home. These individuals declared themselves outcasts from their own society and have decided that the Living Sea will be their domain. Through the use of powerful magic and psionics, they've brought with them an entire floating island, three miles long, and built a fortress upon it in which to live. These githyanki number approximately 1,000 and are said to be allies of the sahuagin of the Astral Reef and communities of the sharkmen in the deeper, uncharted waters of the sea.

The githyanki named their fortress Gad'idine, which means "sea bastion" in their tongue. (Actually, these githyanki have adopted a number of sahuagin and mermen words for things and concepts that they did not have – including "current," "swim," and "fish.") They've even psionically dominated a dragon turtle to use as a guardian.



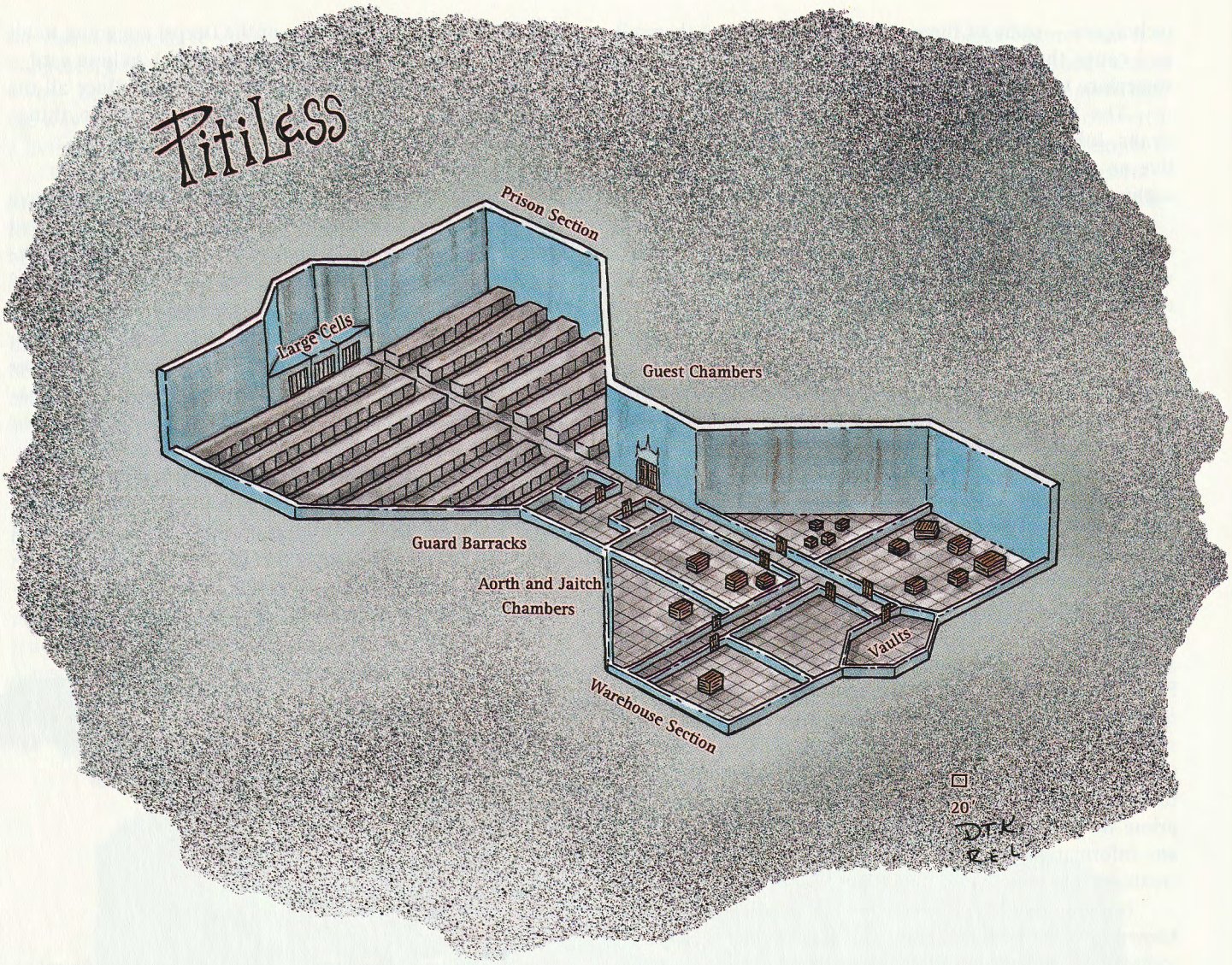
✦ PITILESS ✦

For many millennia (or longer), folks have used the Astral as the place to send their refuse: cursed items, magical experiments gone awry, and unwanted berks who have been banished from their societies.

A group of bashers decided to take up the reins and control this aspect of the Astral Plane, creating a prison/warehouse for unwanted people and things. Pitiless has a reputation second only to Carceri itself as the most horrible prison of the planes.

The commandants of Pitiless are twin dwarf Doomguard members, Aorth With No Heart (Pr/♂ dwarf/F10,T10/Doomguard/NE) and Jaich With No Spirit (Pr/♂ dwarf/F9, C9/Doomguard/CN) who believe that contrary to what folks think, things do decay on the Astral. To prove their point, they created Pitiless to hold things there for a long, long time and observe the (albeit incredibly slow) changes. The brothers may differ in alignment (Aorth is more cruel, Jaich is less controlled), but they work well together. Chant has it that these two dwarves have been watching their charges in Pitiless for over a thousand years.

Pitiless is located in an area known as the Deadmind, because there are no drifting thought energies here. The



psychic wind never blows. The prison itself probably created this zone, when all the random thoughts that were here coalesced into astral searchers through the anguish Pitiless has caused. These searchers have long since left or been destroyed, and now there is only emptiness. This void within the void keeps out most astral creatures, including githyanki, astral dreadnoughts, and other dangers.

The masters of Pitiless employ a number of guards which many (especially primes) would consider odd allies for a pair of dwarves – a regiment of 50 well-trained frost giants. Nonetheless, the giants and dwarves respect each other and get along well. The giants' presence tends to make Pitiless a cold place. (A body can always see her breath there, and many prisoners claim they haven't been warm in centuries.)

Chant is that a yugoloth (or perhaps a whole entourage of the fiends) visits Pitiless on a regular basis, but the brothers deny it, so no one knows the purpose of the visits (if any).

WAREHOUSE SECTION

There are two main areas of the warehouse section. The largest is a chamber filled with crates and other containers, each filled with hazardous objects and substances like minor cursed magical items, special poisons, acids, and malfunctioning or botched enchanted devices. These are organized and cataloged.

The other area in the warehouse section is the individual vaults. These contain the particularly horrible things that are a danger to those around them (or sometimes to a whole world or plane). Artifacts, banes, lich phylacteries, fiend-possessed items, and even an uncontrollable *sphere of annihilation* remain here – perhaps (hopefully) forever.

Four on-staff wizards (Pl/var/M9–M12/var/var) provide the spells to neutralize some of the more dangerous items. They are paid well for their risk-filled work.

PRISON SECTION

The prison section of Pitiless has no torture chamber. Such ministrations never occur. The horror of the place doesn't involve physical pain (except as punishments for unruly or unwanted behavior). It comes from the fact that the prisoners know that they are there for life – and time doesn't pass on the plane. To make it worse, even if a body escaped and left the Astral, she'd probably die of old age as soon as she got away. Most of the time, the guards are busy keeping the prisoners from attempting suicide – that's considered an escape attempt.

The kind of prisoners found here are usually the vilest of villains condemned to eternal imprisonment, or foes who could not be killed and were banished to the Astral instead. A small handful are actually good-aligned folk of some repute (paladins and such) who were sent here rather than being killed, because their foes knew that putting them in the dead-book would only send them to the paradise of the Upper Planes – and probably into the armies marshaled there.

Many of the cells and confinement facilities are constructed with great enchantments to hold powerful prisoners. Some of these inmates are so powerful, in fact, that they had to have special cells designed just for them. The masters of Pitiless are more than willing to accommodate such things – it keeps the on-staff wizards busy, if nothing else. Rumors abound about the prisoners found here – some say even powerful fiends, aasimon, monsters of legend, and famous historical bloods are among the inmates.

Many have said that Pitiless may be one of the easiest-to-run prisons anywhere, since many of the inmates never leave their cells, and none of them ever need to be fed (remember, no one eats on the Astral). Nonetheless, the masters keep themselves busy observing the prisoners (and the items in the warehouse), looking for signs of decay.

THE SWALLOWED CITY
1. Kinnifar Keep
2. Xarbor's
3. Astral Warrior's Guildhouse
4. Magehall
5. Jevbesh
20'
D.T.K.

✦ THE SWALLOWED CITY ✦

The Swallowed City is yet another Astral location that's come about because of the plane's way of dragging things in from other planes. This was once a city on the Prime, or a portion of a city, that was sucked in when a new conduit was formed. The inhabitants of this city were a resourceful bunch of spivs who wouldn't allow themselves to see this as the end. Instead, they adapted to the Astral and adapted their city as well.

The buildings of the Swallowed City are tied or chained together with whatever was handy at the time in order to keep the city as a cohesive whole (not enough ground was taken with the burg to hold it all together).

1. Kinnifar Keep. At the center of the burg is a small castle. The rest of the town radiates outward from this castle on ropes and chains. Only an addle-cove'd be surprised that the town's high-up, Alfred Kinnifar (Pr/♂ human/F8/LG), lives here. This old berk's been in charge of the place since it was drawn here and is the primary nail that holds the whole thing together. It's said that nobody sneezes in the Swallowed City without Lord Kinnifar assuring them it's all right to do so. He doesn't necessarily like folks' utter reliance on him, but he doesn't want to abandon them, either.

2. Xarbor's Wayward Tavern. Folks call Xarbor's the "wayward" tavern because it dislodged itself somehow from its moorings, but got caught up in the tethers which hold some other buildings together. Xarbor (Pr/♂ human/0-level/N) himself always says, "Yep, she tried to get away, but she didn't quite make it, heh heh." The tavern's frequented by a number of astral travelers who – though they don't *need* to – are happy to partake of Xarbor's beverages. Even though his original stock ran out long ago, the barkeep has since worked out a deal with some planar traders to keep him well supplied.

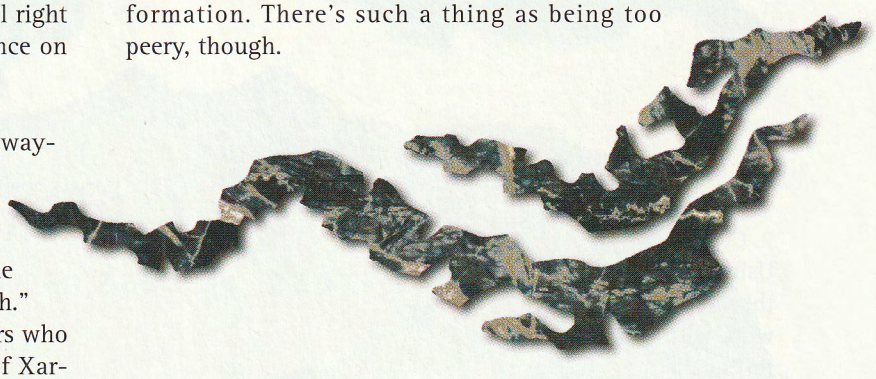
3. Astral Warrior's Guildhouse. This building is used as a headquarters by a group calling itself the Astral Warriors. The guild is aimed at mercenaries who operate throughout the Great Ring and wish to utilize the Astral as their base of operations. The guild draws travelers from every plane to the Swallowed City to hire their services. There are anywhere from 50 to 100 warriors dwelling here at any given time.

4. Magehall. It's no dark that wizards love the Astral – they're stronger there, and their spells work better; it's great. The guild that utilizes this hall is an attempt to organize the mages that come to the Astral for the long haul – that is, those wizards intending on spending a great deal of time here, or never leaving at all. Calling themselves simply the Mages, these wizards are interested in every aspect of a wizard's life. The Magehall has an impressive library, rooms for the members to rest, and even a supply of various components.

The guild is also interested, as a group, on working together to solve problems a wizard could run into on the Astral. For example, if a body cheats time by spending years on the Astral, her greatest fear becomes expulsion from the plane and having those years catch up. So, the guild is focused on ways to avoid the psychic wind, banishment spells, and other threats which can force a body off the Astral.

Membership in the guild costs 1,000 gp plus 100 gp per year (which is determined by several planewalker members from Sigil). There are over 400 members, though only about 50 are ever in the Magehall at a time.

5. Jevbesh. This githyanki is a pariah – he's rejected the ways of his folk, and he's given them the laugh for good. Now Jevbesh (Pl/♂ githyanki/F3/N) lives among the non-githyanki as a sage, specializing in lanning folks about the ways of his people. For a pretty piece of jink, Jevbesh'll give the chant on the githyanki, telling a berk anything he wants to know. 'Course, some folks say that Jevbesh tells them anything they want to *hear* and isn't interested in really providing accurate information. Others go so far as to claim that he's been sent by the githyanki to spread misinformation. There's such a thing as being too peery, though.



✦ ZESS' FORGE ✦

Magical weapons and armor lose their potency as a body takes them farther from the plane on which they were created. This means that a canny cutter will always try to have his enchanted blade be one forged on his current plane or one close to it. The great thing about the Astral Plane, as far as the Outer Planes go, is that it's near everything.

Zess (or Zess 8, as some call it) is a rogue modron (Pl/∅ rogue modron/F8/Fated/LN) who's twigged to the idea that it's jink that makes the multiverse go and brings order to everything. That said, it (although Zess prefers to be called a female, modrons have no gender) tumbled to the idea of a magical weapon and armor forge on the Astral as an efficient way to make money. It – that is, she – was very, very right.

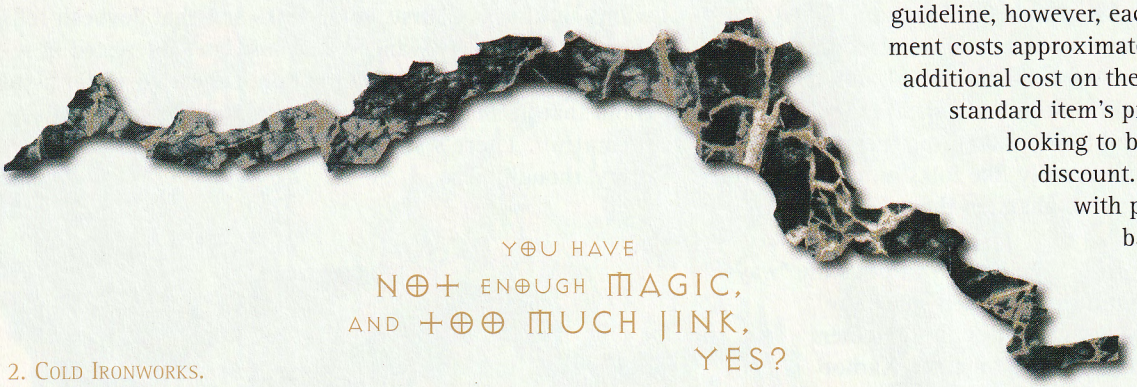
Because of the value of the commodities here and the amount of money that exchanges hands, the forge is built and guarded like a fortress. A small army mans the garrison, and – not surprisingly – they're very well armed.

FORGE LAYOUT

The forge is built much like a githyanki fortress on a floating island. A number of buildings compose the facility, protected by guards and magic.

The alchemists and mages that work for Zess have placed a number of wards to protect the forge. Anyone entering the warded area (see map) without giving the proper command word (which changes once every two weeks for security purposes) is affected as per a *fire trap* cast by a 12th-level wizard. Further, each building is protected with *alarm* spells to alert the guards. The warehouse is particularly well protected, but these defenses are detailed below.

1. BLACKSMITH. The folks that work in this section deal with iron, making the bulk of the magical weapons and armor of the forge. Fifty-five people work here full-time.



YOU HAVE NOT ENOUGH MAGIC, AND TOO MUCH JINK, YES?

— ZESS, OF ZESS' FORGE

2. COLD IRONWORKS. Using a special process, the workers in this area work with what some folks call meteoric iron – rare materials which are of special use against certain planar beings. While the weapons produced here are not magical, the process to forge them is heavily enchanted. Ten workers toil here.

3. GOLDSMITHS. Though gold armor and weapons are made only for special orders (they are expensive, poor-quality, and hard to enchant), many weapons are given gold inlays, plating, and other decorations. Five goldsmiths work here.

4. GUARD BARRACKS. These large buildings house the various guards and escorts for the forge. These cutters are issued their armor and weapons at the beginning of their shift at the warehouse. Standard guards (3rd-level fighters) are armed with +2 weapons and armor. There is a total of 100 standard guards, 30 elite guards, and 6 guard-mages (5th-level mages).

5. HIGH-UPS' QUARTERS. Zess it- . . . um . . . *her*self lives here with the 24 alchemists and 14 wizards that provide the enchantments to power the products made in the forge. These are top-shelf accommodations, for Zess is convinced that well-treated folks will produce good work.

Under this building is the vault where Zess keeps the jink that she's earned in this enterprise. Not all of it is hers of course, since the vault also holds all forge funds, payroll, etc.

6. RECEPTION AREA. Some folks might call this the sales area. Escorts (3rd-level fighters) bring potential customers here to discuss their needs with representatives (Pl/var/F5/Fated/N). The representatives demonstrate weapons and armor – that's why Zess hires only capable fighters for this position – as well as take orders, measure folks for armor, and charm the customers.

Prices are always negotiable. As a standard guideline, however, each "plus" of enchantment costs approximately 1,000 gp, with an additional cost on the top of five times the standard item's price. Those customers looking to buy in bulk get a 20% discount. Special orders (items with particular engravings, base materials, shapes, or sizes) cost at least 10% extra. Costly additions, such as gold or silver inlays, raise the base item price by five to ten times but have no effect on the enchantment costs.

Very special items, such as weapons or armor with properties above and beyond the norm (slaying weapons, vorpal blades, etc.) are treated on a case-by-case basis, special order only, and are only occasionally available. The representatives usually have to check with the wizards and alchemists to discover whether the request is even a possibility.

As a precaution, a wizard (Pl/var/M5/Free League/LN) watches from a hidden room, using *detect magic* to make sure that customers do not place magical influences over the guards or sales representatives.

7. SILVERSMITHS. Silver items are a little more common than those made of gold, but for the most part, the six silversmiths spend their time with decorative inlays.

8. STONECRAFTERS. Like the woodworkers, the craftsmen that toil here make nonmetal weapons for the forge. This is the smallest and least used area, because only special projects

require enchanted stone hammerheads, arrowheads, or the like. They do produce a batch of magical sling-stones now and again. Three skilled stonecrafters work in this area.

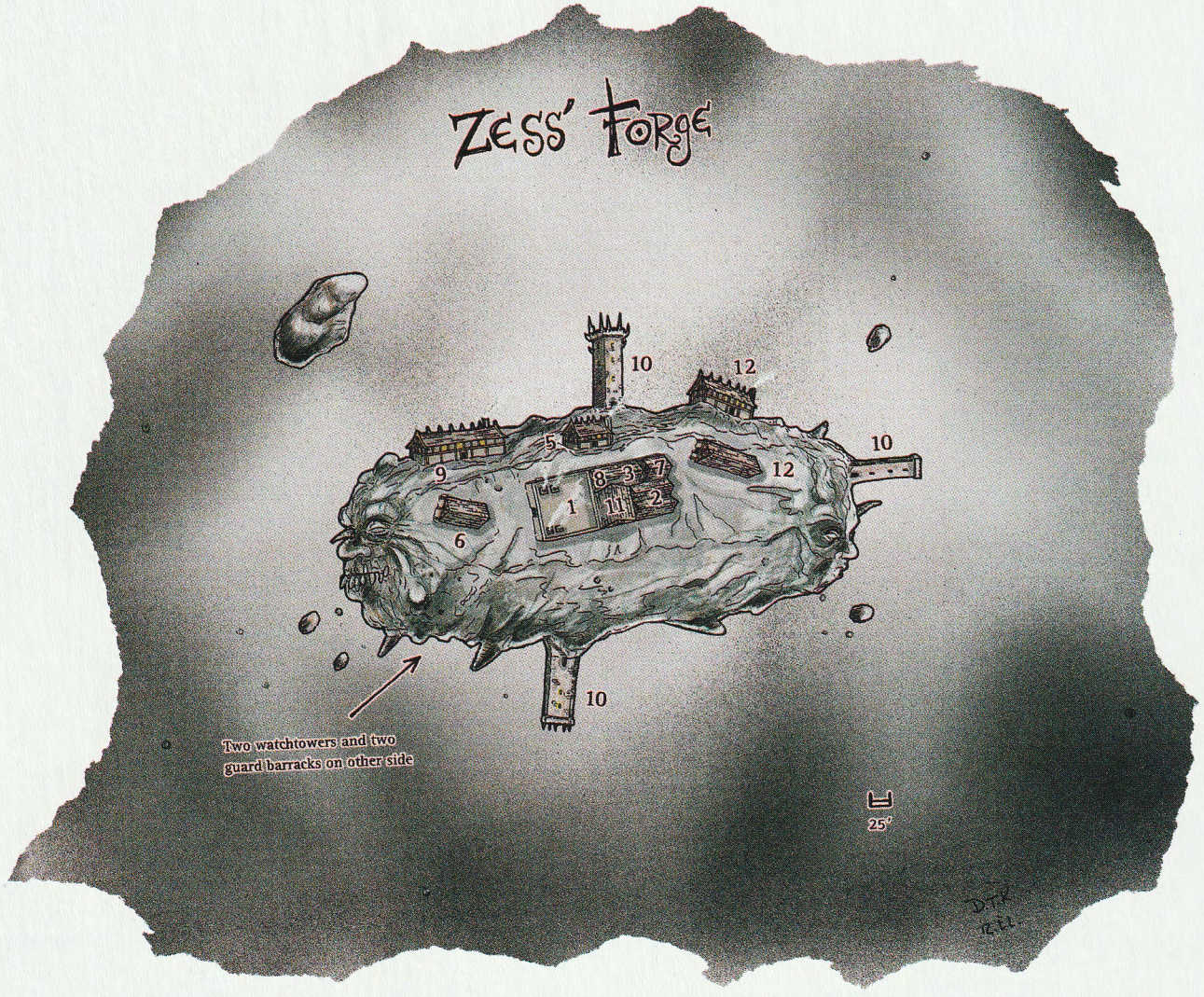
9. Warehouse. Though this area is called a warehouse, it is more appropriately called a vault. This building is made of thick iron walls, enchanted so as to be virtually impenetrable, even by magic. Further, a *symbol of pain* protects the doors, and the walls are enchanted so that if they are breached, the force is returned in the form of a 10 HD *lightning bolt* upon the perpetrator. Ten elite guards (Pl/♂ bariaur/F6/Free League/NG) watch over the building at all times, each armed with a *battle axe +4* and wearing *plate armor +3*.

The contents of the warehouse are almost too numerous and too unbelievable to detail. Rack upon rack and row upon row of magical weapons of every possible type and size fill the place. They range in quality from +2 (the most common) to +4. The forge does not produce weapons of +1 quality (for if taken off the Astral, they have no bonus), nor does it produce +5 weapons (for they do not have the skill or required materials). Missiles like arrows and crossbow bolts are the most numerous weapons, with long swords, daggers, crossbows, and spears making up the bulk of the rest. Other types of weapons are represented here, and the craftsmen are more than happy to take a body's special order here. They'll ask for just a little more jink, but no money down. . . .

10. Watchtowers. These defensive structures let bashers watch over the forge facilities. They are manned by ten elf guards (Pr/♂ elf/F3/LN) Zess had recruited away from a prime-material world for their skill in archery. Each arms himself with a weapon he's well-acquainted with – a *longbow +2* – and wears *chain mail +2*.

11. Woodcrafters. Despite the forge name, workers produce a number of nonmetal-related crafts as well. In this area, 18 fletchers craft magical arrows, and woodworkers fashion spears, axe handles, and other wooden items.

12. Workers' Quarters. These buildings house the 250 well-paid and well-treated workers that are the lifeblood of the facility. Many of these folks are highly-skilled individuals with great egos.



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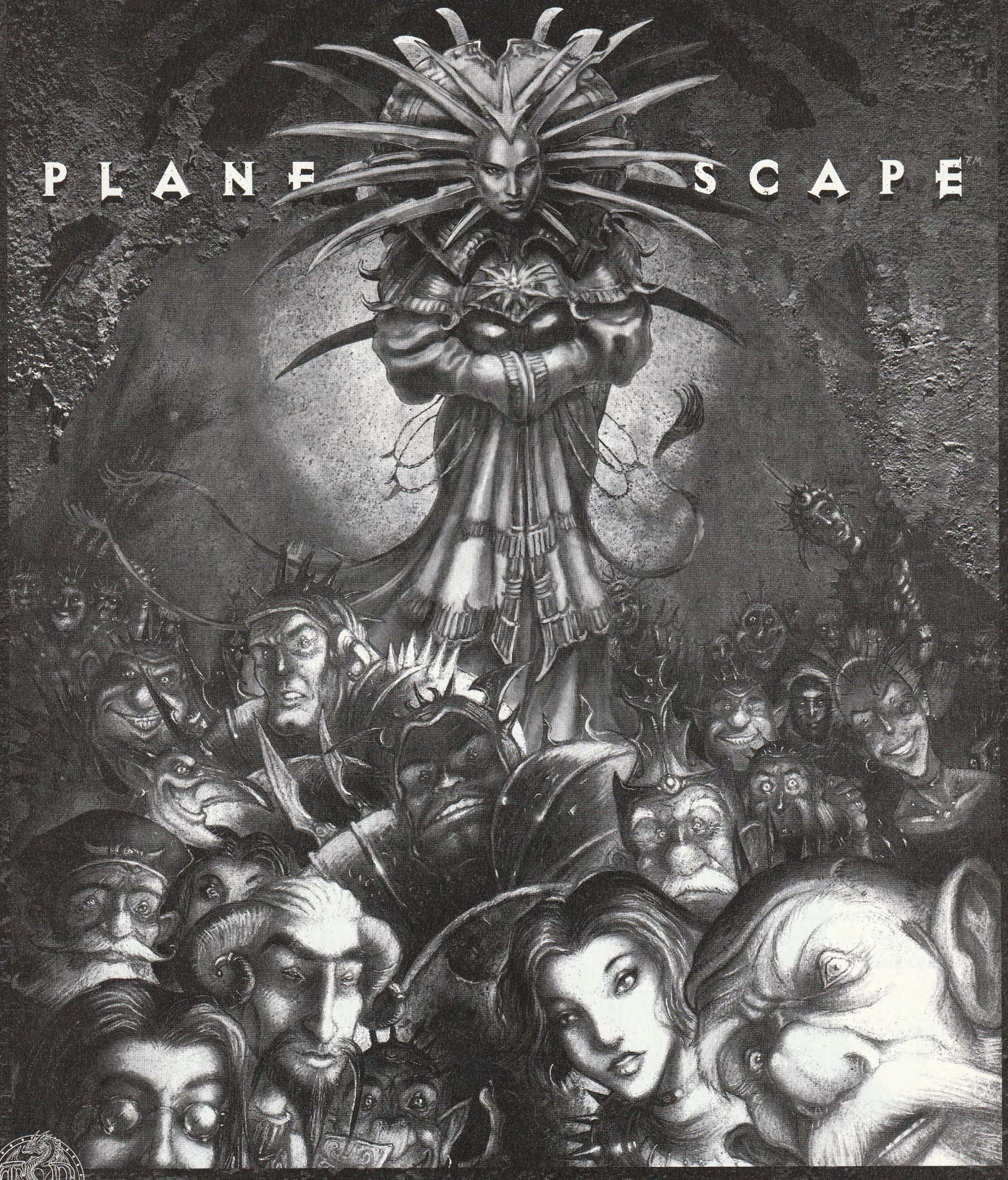

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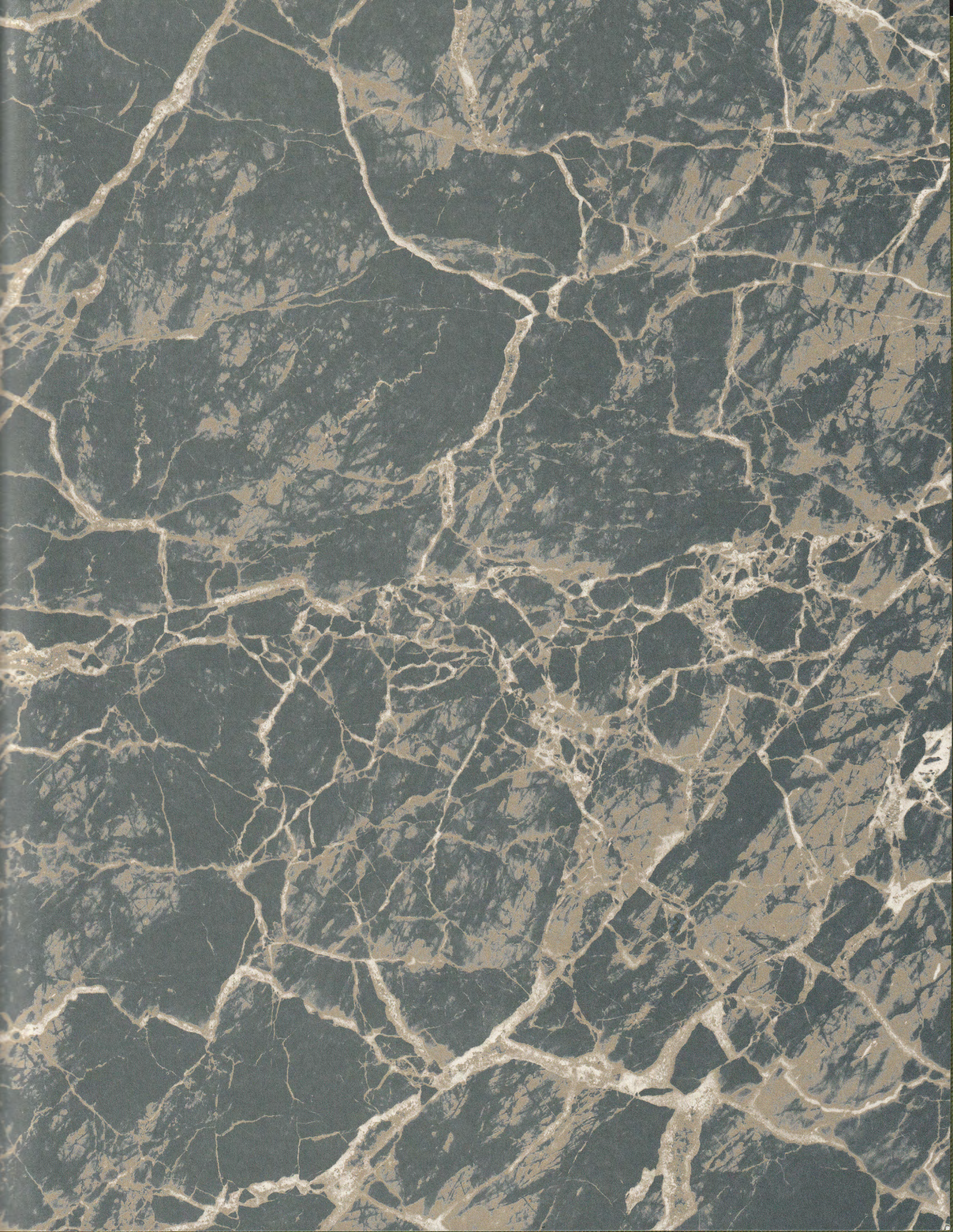

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

A Guide to the Astral Plane

by Monte Cook

"SO WHY DO THEY CALL IT THE SILVER VOID? MUST MEAN THERE'S NOTHIN' THERE . . . RIGHT?"

— SOME CLUELESS SOD

Most berks think the Astral Plane's an empty place, serving as nothing but a cosmic highway connecting all the other places in the multiverse. Canny planewalkers know differently, though. Here are just a few of the "secrets" of the Silver Void that this book explains:

- It is the backdrop of the multiverse, where phenomena such as space and time are so vastly different from "normal" that only a true blood knows his way around.
- When he's on the Astral Plane, a basher moves, fights, and acts solely with his mind.
- It is the closest thing the multiverse has to a "plane of magic," where sorcery and spells are not only more powerful, but are palpable, tangible objects.
- The primary inhabitants are the infamous githyanki, an ancient race of wizards and warriors who know the dark of many secrets forbidden to others.
- The Astral Plane is literally the dead-book of the gods.

NOW, THAT'S NOT NOTHIN', IS IT, BERK?

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